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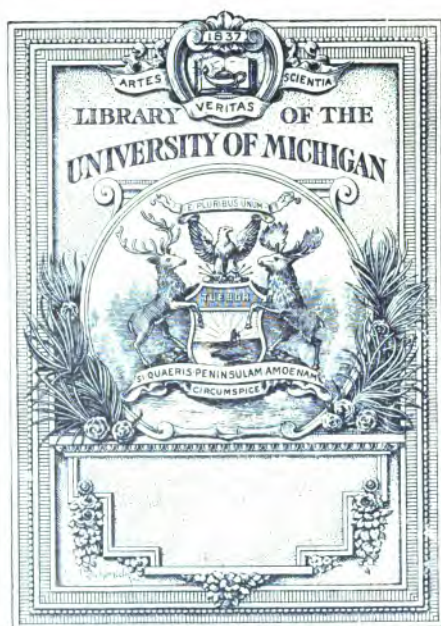
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· AN ·
INTRODUCTION
TO · GOOD · POETRY



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AN INTRODUCTION TO GOOD POETRY

BY

E. F. DAVIDSON, M.A.

"More and more we must turn
to poetry to interpret life for us,
to console us, to sustain us."

—*M. Arnold.*

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what to look for in others, and how to deal with them in teaching them to children. I am well aware that to ordinary readers it will seem unnecessary and impertinent to dwell at such length upon things which are obvious to them; but to elementary school children of twelve or thirteen they are not obvious: one cannot take it for granted that they understand even the simplest language, and, in attempting to stimulate their imagination and arouse in them some literary sense, a very full treatment, such as is here suggested, is necessary.

The poems are arranged to illustrate and “interpret” successive phases and experiences of life, from childhood to death.

E. F. D.



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INTRODUCTION

WHAT USE CAN BE MADE OF POETRY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS?

Poetry is essentially a thing to be felt, not argued about or explained; it is a difficult matter therefore to speak about it. It appeals to the emotions rather than to the reason. Definitions of it are unsatisfactory, and when one who delights in and is helped by the best poetry endeavours to explain to others *how* he derives pleasure and profit from it, he is at a loss how to begin.

Yet this question of the use which may be made of poetry in our schools is an important one, and one which has been a good deal neglected; so that it may be well to gather together at any rate a few fragmentary thoughts about it, without pretending to deal exhaustively with the subject.

The importance of poetry in our elementary school course has been recognized for some time past by the requirement that a certain number of lines shall be learned by heart every year in each class. This is in itself an admirable provision, but from the nature of the case only a limited amount can be learned by heart. In addition to this, there might with advantage be a much more wide *reading* of poetry, especially in the higher classes.

Only a limited number of lines can be learned, but it must not be too limited. In former years the very modest minimum prescribed by the Code used to satisfy most teachers. Very often the lines were learned just before the annual examination,

and for the rest of the year no poetry was taken. If it was taken throughout the year, the same few lines were repeated again and again, till the children were wearied to death of them. In either case the object aimed at in prescribing the learning of poetry was defeated. There should be regular lessons throughout the year, and when one piece is known the children should go on to learn another, it being quite possible to keep fresh their knowledge of the old pieces by an occasional repetition of them. The aim should be always to rouse the children's interest in what they learn, not to secure a mere parrot repetition of it, nor to make them dislike it by going over it *ad nauseam*. The sensible course is to read as much poetry as possible, and to learn by heart the best pieces read. It is not, of course, necessary that all the lines learned should come from one poem and be continuous. Extracts here and there which are specially beautiful may be learned, or a number of short complete poems.

What, then, are some of the reasons for the study of poetry in our schools? (i) The first is that it cultivates the imagination. "However moderate and limited the opportunity for education," says Mr. Frederic Harrison, "in its way it should be always more or less symmetrical and balanced, appealing equally in turn to the three grand intellectual elements—imagination, memory, and reflection."

No one will deny that the work in our elementary schools trains the memory. It is indeed the chief indictment against the system that it teaches the children to rely too much on memory—to learn by rote,—and does not develop originality and power of independent thought. We are becoming more alive now to the need of getting children to think for themselves, and this involves not only reflection but imagination. The two cannot be labelled as separate faculties. They intermingle with one another; and so in every subject in which we stimulate children to think for themselves we are developing their imagination also. But more direct training of the imagination is undoubtedly needed.

"We live by admiration, hope, and love", says Wordsworth; surely our schools should endeavour to train children to admire and love what is really beautiful in Nature and Art and Music and Literature. What a resource it would be in after-life for these children if during their school-days they had formed habits of healthy recreation, instead of having no interests beyond the shop or factory in which they work, the street or slum in which they live. If only their artistic imagination had been trained, many men and women who now give way to drink or some other form of vice, or at any rate waste their time, would be able to find pleasure in a country walk, or a visit to a picture-gallery or museum, or a concert or musical society, or—above all else—in books. What a solace, too, it is in worry and illness and pain to be able by the aid of the imagination to escape from the troubles of real life into the realm of fancy. There was an interesting article in the *Spectator* some time ago on "Literature as an Anodyne", in which it was related that James Russell Lowell, when he lay on his death-bed, was asked how he felt, and replied that he had forgotten all his bodily pains, for he was deep in *Rob Roy*. Romances such as those of Scott, and poetry, too, have power to make the sufferer forget for a time his misfortunes, while he travels through the ideal world which they create.

Something may be done at school, especially by means of the object-lessons, to encourage a love of nature; though it is difficult to do much for children in the middle of a large town. Excursions into the country or the parks under the guidance of a teacher who loves and knows something of nature may be of great help. Again, many of our schools are now provided with excellent pictures. Often these are reproductions of famous works, and these—given a teacher who cares about pictures—may be used to arouse in children the beginnings of an appreciation of Art. In towns, too, there are opportunities for visiting art-galleries and museums. An art museum in every town, such as that at Ancoats, Manchester, would be of the greatest value for exciting an interest both in Nature and

Art among children. So, too, the training in singing received at school should be the first stepping-stone to a love of Music. Just in the same way, the reading lessons should be used to awaken a love of good literature, especially the imaginative and poetical. The process might be begun in the infant school with fairy tales and other suitable stories. Then there are the old Greek tales, which can be found in Kingsley's *Heroes* and Hawthorne's *Wonder Book*; *Robinson Crusoe*; *Alice in Wonderland*; and many another, by which the children can be led on to delight in the romances of our great novelists, Scott pre-eminently. Besides these, they should read poetry proper. It is difficult, perhaps, to find verse which is at the same time really poetical and suitable for very young children; but as the children grow older, more and more can be found.

The first great reason, then, for the study of poetry is that it develops the imagination. But (ii), as was said before, imagination and thought are closely interwoven, and opportunities will constantly arise of making the children think out for themselves the meaning of what is said, and thus stimulating their intellect proper no less than their imagination.

(iii) Once again, poetry does not merely sharpen our wits or give us emotional pleasure. In the best poetry there is, as Matthew Arnold insisted, a high truth and seriousness, as well as beauty of language. It is full of moral lessons; it is a great character-former. "More and more we must turn to poetry", to quote Arnold again, "to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us." Love of nature and the God who has made it, love of one's country, courage, cheerfulness, strenuousness, fairness, unselfishness—these are taught by many a poem simple enough in thought and language even for children of the elementary school age; and if they have learned as children to enjoy poetry, and read it willingly, they will find, as they grow older and sorrows come upon them, many poems which will wonderfully "console and sustain" them.

It remains to mention some of the conditions which must be fulfilled if poetry-reading is to be of real benefit to children.

(1) In the first place, then, the subject-matter of the pieces chosen must not be altogether outside their experience. We want them by the aid of their imagination to construct a picture of what is set before them, and this they cannot do if they have not the necessary stock of experiences upon which to build. For example, much of the most beautiful poetry deals with love; but love poems are obviously unsuitable for children. Many beautiful poems, again, are full of the sadness of life—what Wordsworth calls “the burthen of the mystery, . . . the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world”,—which older people feel, but children happily escape. Such should be avoided for school reading, and have therefore been omitted from this collection. Town children, again, are obviously handicapped for appreciating poems about the beauty of nature, by their ignorance of the sights and sounds referred to, though this is no reason for not developing such appreciation as far as possible.

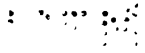
(2) Secondly, the language of the pieces chosen must be clear and simple, the construction of the sentences straightforward and not involved. While, however, we insist on the need for simple language and simple thought in the poetry used by children, it remains quite true that to read and listen to and learn good poetry may be of great benefit to them, even when they understand imperfectly, or scarcely at all, the thoughts which it contains. They can delight in the beauty of the sounds and the rhythm without troubling about the meaning, just as people who do not know Greek listen with pleasure to the reading of Homer and enjoy the roll of his majestic lines. And all the while a love for beautiful and noble poetry will be sinking into them, and when they grow older the lines which they learned and enjoyed in childhood for the mere beauty of their sound will come home to them in their full meaning and help to “interpret life” for them and “to console and sustain” them. Here is an extract from a letter describing a little seven-year-old girl’s intense delight in the rhythm of *Hiawatha*: “The child slept with her beloved

'Hue Arthur', as she called him, under her pillow; and many a time have I heard her crooning to herself the song of old Nokomis or the passing of Hiawatha. She did not understand the words, but undoubtedly she will love poetry, and she will instinctively know the good from the bad."

(3) Thirdly, the children's interest must be aroused. This is most likely to be done by a narrative poem with a good stirring story. There are many such, describing historical events, which would be suitable; and, in passing, it may be well to urge the desirability of connecting the reading of historical novels and poems as much as possible with the history lessons given in school; they give a vividness and reality to the subject which the ordinary history lesson and "reader" cannot. There are, of course, many other poems with good interesting stories besides the historical. Many poems, again, describe in simple and beautiful language the grandeur of the sea, the delights of the country, the sights and sounds of spring, and other wonders and beauties of nature. Such may fittingly be used for children.

(4) Lastly, the most important condition of all, if poetry-reading is to be of real use, is that the teacher shall himself be fond of poetry. If he is, he can communicate his enthusiasm to the children. If he does not appreciate and enter into the spirit of the piece, but reads it through in a dull, mechanical way, with just the explanation of a word here and there, the lesson will not interest the children, and will probably give them a dislike of poetry instead of a love for it. And not only enthusiasm is needed, but discrimination. The taste must be cultivated, so that we may be able to distinguish what is really poetical and beautiful from what is commonplace, so that we may not waste the children's time in learning by heart the verses of third or fourth rate writers, while we neglect those of the great masters of poetry. Taste, says Ruskin, is the instantaneous preference of the noble to the ignoble. How are we to acquire this in judging poetry? Probably the only way is to read over and over again some poems which admittedly reach

the highest standard, till we become, as it were, soaked in them, and use them instinctively as a test by which to judge other poetry which is set before us. Matthew Arnold recommends us to take single lines of the greatest poetry, "to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry". "It is much better", he says again, "simply to have recourse to concrete examples; to take specimens of poetry of the high, the very highest quality, and to say: The characters of a high quality of poetry are what is expressed *there*. They are far better recognized by being felt in the verse of the master than by being perused in the prose of the critic." It is well, then, to read and learn by heart a few examples of the best poetry of those who are admittedly our greatest poets, and to try and make these a standard by which to form an opinion about other poems. Most of the pieces in this collection will serve the purpose well. It is safest to begin with the recognized masters, not because everything which they wrote is superior to the work of less-known poets, but because at their best they tower above all others. Wordsworth especially, and Tennyson too, and Shakespeare himself, produced much that cannot be placed in the highest class of poetry, and we need to recognize this and not to think that because a poem is by someone with a great name it is necessarily very good. But the best work of the great men surpasses that of other poets both in quality and quantity. We must rely on the judgment of others at the outset to tell us what is good, and when our taste is formed we shall be able to pick out for ourselves what is really beautiful and poetic both in the greater and the lesser writers. It is indeed a thing worth striving for, to acquire an appreciation of the best poetry. The beauty of its language gives us delight and solace in times of leisure, or trouble, or pain, and the high truth and seriousness of its thoughts interpret life for us, console us, and sustain us.



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SECTION I—CHILDHOOD

I. WYNKEN, BLYNKEN, AND NOD

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night
Sailed off in a wooden shoe—
Sailed on a river of misty light
Into a sea of dew;
“Where are you going, and what do you wish?” 5
The old moon asked the three.
“We have come to fish for the herring-fish
That live in this beautiful sea;
Nets of silver and gold have we,”
Said Wynken, Blynken, and Nod. 10

The old moon laughed and sang a song,
As they rocked in the wooden shoe—
And the wind that sped them all night long
Ruffled the waves of dew;
The little stars were the herring-fish 15
That lived in that beautiful sea;
“Now cast your nets wherever you wish—
But never afraid are we,”
So cried the stars to the fishermen three—
Wynken, Blynken, and Nod. 20

All night long their nets they threw
For the fish in the twinkling foam—
Then down from the sky came the wooden shoe
Bringing the fishermen home.

'T was all so pretty a sail, it seemed 25
 As if it could not be,
 And some folks thought 't was a dream they 'd dreamed
 Of sailing that beautiful sea;
 But I shall name you the fishermen three—
 Wynken, Blynken, and Nod. 30

Wynken and Blynken are two little eyes,
 And Nod is a little head,
 And the wooden shoe that sailed the skies
 Is a wee one's trundle bed;
 So shut your eyes while mother sings 35
 Of wonderful sights that be,
 And you shall see the beautiful things
 As you rock on the misty sea,
 Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen three—
 Wynken, Blynken, and Nod. 40

—*Eugene Field.*

II. FOREIGN LANDS

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Up into the cherry-tree
 Who should climb but little me?
 I held the trunk with both my hands,
 And looked abroad on foreign lands.

I saw the next-door garden lie, 5
 Adorned with flowers, before my eye,
 And many pleasant places more
 That I had never seen before.

I saw the dimpling river pass
 And be the sky's blue looking-glass; 10
 The dusty roads go up and down
 With people tramping in to town.

If I could find a higher tree
Farther and farther I should see,
To where the grown-up river slips 15
Into the sea among the ships,
To where the roads on either hand
Lead onward into fairy-land.

—*R. L. Stevenson.*

III. THE LAND OF COUNTERPANE

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When I was sick and lay a-bed
I had two pillows at my head
And all my toys beside me lay
To keep me happy all the day

And sometimes for an hour or so 5
I watched my leaden soldiers go
With different uniforms and drills
Among the bed-clothes, through the hills;

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets
All up and down among the sheets; 10
Or brought my trees and houses out
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still
That sits upon the pillow-hill
And sees before him, field and plain, 15
The pleasant land of counterpane.

—*R. L. Stevenson.*

IV. SELECTIONS FROM "BROTHER AND SISTER"

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I

I cannot choose but think upon the time
 When our two lives grew like two buds that kiss
 At lightest thrill from the bee's swinging chime,
 Because the one so near the other is.

He was the elder and a little man
 Of forty inches, bound to show no dread,
 And I the girl that puppy-like now ran,
 Now lagged behind my brother's larger tread.

5

I held him wise, and when he talked to me
 Of snakes and birds, and which God loved the best,
 I thought his knowledge marked the boundary
 Where men grew blind, though angels knew the rest.

10

If he said "Hush!" I tried to hold my breath;
 Wherever he said "Come!" I stepped in faith.

.

II

Our mother bade us keep the trodden ways,
 Stroked down my tippet, set my brother's frill,
 Then with the benediction of her gaze
 Clung to us lessening, and pursued us still.

15

Across the homestead to the rookery elms,
 Whose tall old trunks had each a grassy mound,
 So rich for us, we counted them as realms
 With varied products: here were earth-nuts found,

20

And here the Lady-Fingers in deep shade;
 Here sloping toward the moat the rushes grew,
 The large to split for pith, the small to braid; 25
 While over all the dark rooks cawing flew,

And made a happy strange solemnity,
 A deep-toned chant from life unknown to me.

III

Our meadow path had memorable spots:
 One where it bridged a tiny rivulet, 30
 Deep hid by tangled blue forget-me-nots;
 And all along the waving grasses wet

My little palm, or nodded to my cheek,
 When flowers with upturned faces gazing, drew
 My wonder downward, seeming all to speak 35
 With eyes of souls that dumbly heard and knew.

Then came the copse, where wild things rushed unseen,
 And black-scathed grass betrayed the past abode
 Of mystic gipsies, who still lurked between
 Me and each hidden distance of the road. 40

A gipsy once had startled me at play,
 Blotting with her dark smile my sunny day.

.

IV

We had the self-same world enlarged for each
 By loving difference of girl and boy;
 The fruit that hung on high beyond my reach 45
 He plucked for me, and oft he must employ

A measuring glance to guide my tiny shoe,
 Where lay firm stepping-stones, or call to mind
 "This thing I like my sister may not do,
 For she is little, and I must be kind".

50

Thus boyish will the nobler mastery learned
 Where inward vision over impulse reigns,
 Widening its life with separate life discerned,
 A like unlike, a self that self restrains.

His years with others must the sweeter be
 For those brief days he spent in loving me—

55

V

His sorrow was my sorrow, and his joy
 Sent little leaps and laughs through all my frame;
 My doll seemed lifeless, and no girlish toy
 Had any reason when my brother came.

60

I knelt with him at marbles, marked his fling
 Cut the ringed stem and make the apple drop,
 Or watched him winding close the spiral string
 That looped the orbits of the humming-top.

Grasped by such fellowship my vagrant thought
 Ceased with dream-fruit dream-wishes to fulfil;
 My æry-picturing fantasy was taught
 Subjection to the harder, truer skill

65

That seeks with deeds to grave a thought-tracked line,
 And by "What is", "What will be" to define.

70

—George Eliot.

SECTION II—WHAT SCHOOL TEACHES

V. VITAI LAMPADA

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published by Elkin Mathews)

There's a breathless hush in the Close to-night—
Ten to make and the match to win—
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
An hour to play and the last man in.
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat, 5
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote:
"Play up! play up! and play the game!"

The sand of the desert is sodden red,—
Red with the wreck of a square that broke;— 10
The Gatling's jammed and the colonel dead
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.
The river of death has brimmed his banks,
And England's far, and Honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks, 15
"Play up! play up! and play the game!"

This is the word that year by year,
While in her place the School is set,
Every one of her sons must hear,
And none that hears it dare forget. 20
This they all with a joyful mind
Bear through life like a torch in flame,
And falling, fling to the host behind—
"Play up! play up! and play the game!"

—Henry Newbolt.

SECTION III—BEAUTIES OF NATURE

VI. HOME-THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

I

Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf 5
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!

II

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows 10
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture 15
The first fine careless rapture!
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower! 20

—*R. Browning.*

VII. SELECTION FROM THE ODE TO A SKYLARK

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
 Bird thou never wert,
 That from heaven, or near it,
 Pourest thy full heart
 In profuse strains of unpremeditated art. 5

Higher still and higher
 From the earth thou springest
 Like a cloud of fire;
 The blue deep thou wingest,
 And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest. 10

The pale purple even
 Melts around thy flight:
 Like a star of heaven,
 In the broad daylight
 Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight. 15

All the earth and air
 With thy voice is loud,
 As, when night is bare,
 From one lonely cloud
 The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed. 20

Sound of ~~vernal~~ showers
 On the twinkling grass,
 Rain-awakened flowers,
 All that ever was
 Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass: 25

Better than all measures
 Of delightful sound,
 Better than all treasures
 That in books are found,
 Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground! 30

Teach me half the gladness
 That thy brain must know,
 Such harmonious madness
 From my lips would flow,
 The world should listen then, as I am listening now. 35
—P. B. Shelley.

VIII. DAFFODILS

I wandered lonely as a cloud
 That floats on high o'er vale and hills,
 When all at once I saw a crowd,
 A host of golden daffodils;
 Beside the lake, beneath the trees, 5
 Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
 And twinkle in the Milky Way,
 They stretched in never-ending line
 Along the margin of a bay; 10
 Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
 Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
 Outdid the sparkling waves in glee;
 A poet could not but be gay 15
 In such a jocund company:
 I gazed and gazed, but little thought
 What wealth the show to me had brought.

Sweet eyes in England, I must flee
Past where the waves' last confines be,
Ere your loved smile I cease to see,
Sweet eyes in England, dear to me.

Dear home in England, safe and fast
If but in thee my lot lie cast, 10
The past shall seem a nothing past
To thee, dear home, if won at last;
Dear home in England, won at last.

—*A. H. Clough.*

XV. HENRY V BEFORE AGINCOURT

(From *Henry V.* Act IV, Scene 3)

Enter the KING

West. O that we now had here
But one ten thousand of those men in England
That do no work to-day!

King Hen. What's he that wishes so?
My cousin Westmoreland? No, my fair cousin:

If we are marked to die, we are enow 5

To do our country loss; and if to live,

The fewer men, the greater share of honour.

God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.

By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,

Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost; 10

It yearns me not if men my garments wear;

Such outward things dwell not in my desires;

But, if it be a sin to covet honour,

I am the most offending soul alive.

No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England: 15

God's peace! I would not lose so great an honour

As one man more, methinks, would share from me

For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more!

(B 548)

Q

How calm it was!—the silence there 25
 By such a chain was bound
 That even the busy woodpecker
 Made stiller by her sound
 The inviolable quietness;
 The breath of peace we drew, 30
 With its soft motion made not less
 The calm that round us grew.
 There seemed from the remotest sea
 Of the white mountain waste,
 To the soft flower beneath our feet, 35
 A magic circle traced.

.
 We paused beside the pools that lie
 Under the forest bough,
 Each seemed as 't were a little sky
 Gulphed in a world below; 40
 A firmament of purple light,
 Which in the dark earth lay,
 More boundless than the depth of night,
 And purer than the day—
 In which the lovely forests grew 45
 As in the upper air,
 More perfect both in shape and hue
 Than any spreading there.

There lay the glade and neighbouring lawn,
 And through the dark green wood 50
 The white sun twinkling like the dawn
 Out of a speckled cloud.
 Sweet views, which in our world above
 Can never well be seen,
 Were imaged by the water's love 55
 Of that fair forest green.

And all was interfused beneath
 With an elysian glow,
 An atmosphere without a breath,
 A softer day below.

60

—*P. B. Shelley.*

X. SELECTION FROM

LINES COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY,
 ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A TOUR

July 13, 1798

Five years have past; five summers with the length
 Of five long winters! and again I hear
 These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
 With a sweet inland murmur.—Once again
 Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs, 5
 That on a wild secluded scene impress
 Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
 The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
 The day is come when I again repose
 Here, under this dark sycamore, and view 10
 These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
 Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
 Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
 Among the woods and copses, nor disturb
 The wild green landscape. Once again I see 15
 These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines
 Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
 Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
 Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
 With some uncertain notice, as might seem 20
 Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
 Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
 The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous Forms,

Where Blake and mighty Nelson fell, 15
 Your manly hearts shall glow,
 As ye sweep through the deep,
 While the stormy winds do blow;
 While the battle rages long and loud,
 And the stormy winds do blow. 20

III

Britannia needs no bulwarks,
 No towers along the steep;
 Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
 Her home is on the deep:
 With thunders from her native oak, 25
 She quells the floods below,
 As they roar on the shore,
 When the stormy winds do blow;
 When the battle rages long and loud,
 And the stormy winds do blow. 30

IV

The meteor-flag of England
 Shall yet terrific burn,
 Till danger's troubled night depart,
 And the star of peace return.
 Then, then, ye ocean-warriors! 35
 Our song and feast shall flow
 To the fame of your name,
 When the storm has ceased to blow;
 When the fiery fight is heard no more,
 And the storm has ceased to blow. 40

—*T. Campbell.*

XVIII. FROM THE ODE ON THE DEATH OF
THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

Who is he that cometh, like an honour'd guest,
With banner and with music, with soldier and with
priest,
With a nation weeping, and breaking on my rest?
Mighty seaman, this is he
Was great by land as thou by sea. 5
Thine island loves thee well, thou famous man,
The greatest sailor since our world began.
Now, to the roll of muffled drums,
To thee the greatest soldier comes;
For this is he 10
Was great by land as thou by sea;
His foes were thine; he kept us free;
O give him welcome, this is he
Worthy of our gorgeous rites,
And worthy to be laid by thee; 15
For this is England's greatest son,
He that gain'd a hundred fights,
Nor ever lost an English gun;
This is he that far away
Against the myriads of Assaye 20
Clash'd with his fiery few and won;
And underneath another sun,
Warring on a later day,
Round affrighted Lisbon drew
The treble works, the vast designs 25
Of his labour'd rampart-lines,
Where he greatly stood at bay,
Whence he issued forth anew,
And ever great and greater grew,
Beating from the wasted vines 30
Back to France her banded swarms,

Back to France with countless blows,
 Till o'er the hills her eagles flew
 Beyond the Pyrenean pines,
 Follow'd up in valley and glen 35
 With blare of bugle, clamour of men,
 Roll of cannon and clash of arms,
 And England pouring on her foes.
 Such a war had such a close.
 Again their ravening eagle rose 40
 In anger, wheel'd on Europe-shadowing wings,
 And barking for the thrones of kings;
 Till one that sought but Duty's iron crown
 On that loud Sabbath shook the spoiler down;
 A day of onsets of despair! 45
 Dash'd on every rocky square
 Their surging charges foam'd themselves away;
 Last, the Prussian trumpet blew;
 Thro' the long-tormented air
 Heaven flash'd a sudden jubilant ray, 50
 And down we swept and charged and overthrew.
 So great a soldier taught us there,
 What long-enduring hearts could do
 In that world-earthquake, Waterloo!
 Mighty Seaman, tender and true, 55
 And pure as he from taint of craven guile,
 O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,
 O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile,
 If aught of things that here befall
 Touch a spirit among things divine, 60
 If love of country move thee there at all,
 Be glad, because his bones are laid by thine!
 And thro' the centuries let a people's voice
 In full acclaim,
 A people's voice, 65
 The proof and echo of all human fame,
 A people's voice, when they rejoice

At civic revel and pomp and game,
Attest their great commander's claim
With honour, honour, honour, honour to him, 70
Eternal honour to his name.

—*Tennyson.*

SECTION V
LESSONS AND EXPERIENCES
OF LIFE

XIX. HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS
FROM GHENT TO AIX

I

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest, 5
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right, 10
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III

'T was moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;

At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffeld, 't was morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!"

IV

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray: 20

V

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back 25
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on. 30

VI

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay spur!
"Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
"We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank, 35
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;

The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff; 40
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

VIII

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and crop over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight 45
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

IX

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jackboots, let go belt and all, 50
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

X

And all I remember is—friends flocking round 55
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent. 60

—*R. Browning.*

XX. ON HIS BLINDNESS

When I consider how my light is spent
 Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
 And that one talent which is death to hide,
 Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present 5
 My true account, lest he returning chide:
 "Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
 I fondly ask: But Patience, to prevent
 That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
 Either man's work, or his own gifts; who best 10
 Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best: his state
 Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
 And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
 They also serve who only stand and wait."

—Milton.

XXI. AULD LANG SYNE

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
 And never brought to min';
 Should auld acquaintance be forgot
 An' days o' lang syne?
Chorus—For auld lang syne, my dear, 5
 For auld lang syne,
 We'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet,
 For auld lang syne.

We twa ha'e run about the braes,
 And pu'd the gowans fine; 10
 But we've wandered mony a weary foot
 Sin' auld lang syne.—*Chorus*.

We twa hae paidl't in the burn,
 Frae mornin' sun till dine;
 But seas between us braid ha'e roared 15
 Sin' auld lang syne.—*Chorus.*

And here's a hand, my trusty freend,
 And gie's a hand o' thine;
 And we'll tak' a richt guid-willie waught
 For auld lang syne.—*Chorus.* 20
 —*R. Burns.*

XXII. SAY NOT THE STRUGGLE NOUGHT AVAILETH

Say not the struggle nought availeth,
 The labour and the wounds are vain,
 The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
 And as things have been, they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars; 5
 It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
 Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
 And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
 Seem here no painful inch to gain, 10
 Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
 Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
 When daylight comes, comes in the light,
 In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly, 15
 But westward, look, the land is bright.
 —*A. H. Clough.*

XXIII. A FAREWELL

Flow down, cold rivulet, to the sea,
Thy tribute wave deliver:
No more by thee my steps shall be
For ever and for ever.

Flow, softly flow, by lawn and lea,
A rivulet then a river:
Nowhere by thee my steps shall be,
For ever and for ever.

But here will sigh thine alder-tree
And here thine aspen shiver;
And here by thee will hum the bee,
For ever and for ever.

A thousand suns will stream on thee,
A thousand moons will quiver;
But not by thee my steps shall be,
For ever and for ever.

—Tennyson.

XXIV. BREAK, BREAK, BREAK

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
 To their haven under the hill; 20
 But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
 And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
 At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
 But the tender grace of a day that is dead 25
 Will never come back to me.

—*Tennyson.*

XXV. WAGES

Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
 Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea—
 Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—
 Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover of glory she:
 Give her the glory of going on, and still to be. 5

The wages of sin is death: if the wages of Virtue be dust,
 Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm and
 the fly?
 She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
 To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky:
 Give her the wages of going on, and not to die. 10

—*Tennyson.*

XXVI. QUIET WORK

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,
 One lesson which in every wind is blown.
 One lesson of two duties kept at one
 Though the loud world proclaim their enmity—

Of toil unsevered from tranquillity; 5
Of labour, that in lasting fruit outgrows
Far noisier schemes, accomplished in repose,
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry.

Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,
Man's senseless uproar mingling with his toil, 10
Still do thy quiet ministers move on,

Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting;
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil;
Labourers that shall not fail, when man is gone.

--M. Arnold.

XXVII. RECESSIONAL

God of our fathers, known of old—
Lord of our far-flung battle-line—
Beneath Whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet, 5
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies—
The captains and the kings depart—
Still stands Thine ancient Sacrifice,
Ah humble and a contrite heart. 10
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called our navies melt away—
On dune and headland sinks the fire—
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday 15
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe— 20
Such boasting as the Gentiles use
Or lesser breeds without the Law—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust 25
In reeking tube and iron shard—
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding calls not Thee to guard—
For frantic boast and foolish word,
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord! Amen. 30
—*Rudyard Kipling.*

SECTION VI—OLD AGE AND DEATH

XXVIII. ULYSSES

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me. 5
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades 10
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all; 15
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades 20
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me 25

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Little remains: but every hour is saved
 From that eternal silence, something more,
 A bringer of new things; and vile it were
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
 And this gray spirit yearning in desire 30
 To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
 Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
 To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
 Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil 35
 This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
 A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
 Subdue them to the useful and the good.
 Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
 Of common duties, decent not to fail 40
 In offices of tenderness, and pay
 Meet adoration to my household gods,
 When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port: the vessel puffs her sail:
 There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners, 45
 Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with
 me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took
 The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
 Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
 Old age hath yet his honour and his toil; 50
 Death closes all: but something ere the end,
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
 Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
 The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
 The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep 55
 Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
 Push off, and sitting well in order smite
 The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds

To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
 Of all the western stars, until I die.
 It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
 It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
 And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
 Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
 We are not now that strength which in old days
 Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
 One equal temper of heroic hearts,
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

—Tennyson.

XXIX. WOLSEY'S FAREWELL

(From *Henry VIII.* Act III, Scene 2)

Wol. Farewell, a long farewell, to all my greatness!
 This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth
 The tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms,
 And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;
 The third day comes a frost, a killing frost;
 And,—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
 His greatness is a ripening,—nips his root,
 And then he falls, as I do. I have ventur'd,
 Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
 This many summers in a sea of glory;
 But far beyond my depth: my high-blown pride
 At length broke under me; and now has left me,
 Weary, and old with service, to the mercy
 Of a rude stream, that must for ever hide me.
 Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye;
 I feel my heart new open'd: O, how wretched
 Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours!
 There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,

That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
 More pangs and fears than wars or women have; 20
 And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
 Never to hope again.—

Enter CROMWELL, amazedly

Why, how now, Cromwell?

Crom. I have no power to speak, sir.

Wol. What, amaz'd

At my misfortunes? can thy spirit wonder
 A great man should decline? Nay, an you weep, 25
 I am fallen indeed.

Crom. How does your grace?

Wol. Why, well;

Never so truly happy, my good Cromwell.
 I know myself now; and I feel within me
 A peace above all earthly dignities,
 A still and quiet conscience. The king has cured me, 30
 I humbly thank his grace; and from these shoulders,
 These ruin'd pillars, out of pity, taken
 A load would sink a navy, too much honour:
 O, 't is a burden, Cromwell, 't is a burden,
 Too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven. 35

—*Shakespeare.*

XXX. PROSPICE

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
 The mist in my face,
 When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
 I am nearing the place,
 The power of the night, the press of the storm, 5
 The post of the foe;

Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
 Yet the strong man must go:
 For the journey is done and the summit attained,
 And the barriers fall, 10
 Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
 The reward of it all.
 I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
 The best and the last!
 I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore, 15
 And bade me creep past.
 No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
 The heroes of old,
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
 Of pain, darkness, and cold. 20
 For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
 The black minute's at end,
 And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,
 Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain, 25
 Then a light, then thy breast,
 O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
 And with God be the rest!

—*R. Browning.*

XXXI. EPILOGUE TO "ASOLANDO"

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At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
 When you set your fancies free,
 Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned,
 Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so.
 —Pity me? 5

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!

What had I on earth to do

With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?

Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivell

—Being—who?

10

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,

Never doubted clouds would break,

Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,

Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,

Sleep to wake.

15

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time

Greet the unseen with a cheer!

Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,

"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed,—fight on, fare ever

There as here!"

20

—*R. Browning.*

NOTES

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

1. Read through the whole poem, then study it in detail, then read it through again and again as a whole.

2. Try to see and make the children see as vividly as possible, with the mind's eye, the scenes suggested and described in the poems.

3. Regard each poem (1) as developing the imagination, (2) as a storehouse of beautiful language, (3) as (in many cases) using this imaginative and beautiful language to convey a moral lesson.

4. Pay attention to the metre—the number of syllables in each line, and the places where the accent falls. To recognize clearly the metre is a great help to right pronunciation of the words. This is, of course, a truism, yet it is strange how often not only children but older people neglect the metre. In rhymed verse, too, notice where the rhymes come.

5. Look out for lines in which the sound or the metre is specially suited to the sense of the words, and almost suggests it.

6. Look out for the construction of the sentences, and the position of the stops. Children have a natural tendency to make a stop at the end of each line, whether the sense demands one or not. Try and get them to read in a natural voice, showing that they recognize that what they are reading means something—not in a dreary sing-song.

7. The notes are, of course, not to be regarded as so much information to be *given* to the children. A great deal of what they suggest can and should be *drawn from* the children.

8. In the notes on metre the mark ~ is used to indicate a "short" or unaccented syllable, the mark — for one "long" or accented. An accented syllable with the accompanying unaccented syllables forms a "foot".

I. WYNKEN, BLYNKEN, AND NOD

A child's dream. The two eyes (Wynken and Blynken) and the head (Nod) sail off in a wooden shoe (the child's bed) up into the sky, which is spoken of as a sea of dew, where the child is going to fish for the stars, which he calls herrings. It is pretty dream-nonsense, the sort of fancy which an imaginative child might well have. No lesson or serious meaning is to be sought in a poem such as this, but as a play of the imagination it is pleasing to older people as well as to children; and it is an ideal song for a mother to sing to her little ones, when rocking them to sleep.

3. The "river of misty light" is perhaps the rays of the moon, along which the boat is supposed to sail into the dewy sky.

13. *sped* = drove them along.

Metre.—There are four accented syllables, and therefore four "feet" in ll. 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 of each verse; three in ll. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10. Sometimes the accented syllable stands alone, sometimes there is one short syllable before it, sometimes two: so that the "foot" is either —, — —, or — — —, *e.g.*,

Wyn | ken Blyn | ken and Nod.

II. FOREIGN LANDS

Picture a little child climbing up into a tree in his father's garden, and looking out on the scene around his home.

The language of the poem is as simple as possible, but even here there is the play of imagination; *e.g.*:

4. Everything beyond the little circle of his own home is a "foreign land" to the child, just as we call all countries but our own "foreign lands".

10. As the sky and clouds are reflected in the water, it is called the sky's "looking-glass".

15. The river when it becomes big is like a child when he becomes "grown up".

18. The unknown country, out of the range of his sight, is to the child fairy-land.

Metre.—Each line has four accented syllables, preceded usually by a short syllable, so that there are four — — "feet". Lines 1 and 2 omit the short syllable in the first foot.

III. THE LAND OF COUNTERPANE

Here we must picture to ourselves a sick child lying in bed, propped up by pillows, and amusing himself with his toys.

The language again is very simple, but imagination shows itself in the child's play with his toy soldiers, toy ships, and toy trees and houses. The uneven surface of the counterpane is a land with hills and plains, big enough to contain a toy army or a toy city, and the child himself is a giant looking down from his big hill (the pillow) upon all these tiny things.

Metre.—The same as in piece ii.

IV. FROM "BROTHER AND SISTER"

A pleasant picture of two children's lives in the country—the boy matter-of-fact, self-confident, masterful, learning unselfishness and gentleness from the need of helping his little sister; the girl dreamy and imaginative, yet devoted to her brother, and learning from him to curb her fancies and be more practical.

2, 3. The children's lives are compared to two buds, so close together that the slightest movement, *e.g.* that of the bee as he hums past them, makes them touch one another.

11, 12. The little girl looks up to her brother and thinks that he knows everything which it is possible for a human being to know.

17 *seq.* Try to make a mental picture of the scenes in this and the next verse.

17-19. The mother watches them as they get further and further away "with the benediction of her gaze", *i.e.* looking lovingly upon them and blessing them. Why are they said to be "lessening"?

23. Lady-Fingers, or kidney-vetch, has yellow flowers, two together at the end of each stalk, flowering June to August.

27, 28. The caw of the rooks seemed solemn and mysterious to the imaginative girl.

34-36. Notice again the imagination of the child: the flowers seem to her to be faces, and almost to speak.

37-40. The dark wood is full of mystery to her—a place where wild animals and gipsies lived.

38. *black-scathed* = the grass is injured and blackened by the gipsies' fires.

43-56. The softening influence upon the boy of his little sister's companionship is here well indicated.

51-54. He learns to check his impulses, to reflect, to think about others who are different from him, and whom he must consider in his actions.

57-70. The girl, on the other hand, is roused from the dreaminess to which she might have become altogether subject: she has a living being to love instead of a doll or toy, and she learns to value activity and real work as they ought to be valued.

61-64. Notice how the boy is always doing something, not dreaming—playing at marbles, or with a top, or stealing apples.

62. He threw sharp stones to cut the stem of the apple and make it drop from the tree.

63, 64. Every child will be familiar with the winding of the "spiral string" which "loops the orbits", *i.e.* winds itself round the circles of the top.

65-69. The girl's wandering (vagrant) fancy ceased to build "castles in the air"—her wishes and their fulfilment being alike unreal. To "grave" = to cut deeply and permanently. The children are compared to sculptors: the girl imagines a very beautiful statue, but it is never really made; the boy plans it in his head (thought-tracked), and follows it up by actually chiselling it out of a block of marble (graving it with deeds).

70. The boy does not concern himself with indefinite fancies of what may happen in the future—"what will be". He concerns himself with the realization of something in the present—"what is".

Metre.—There are verses or stanzas of fourteen lines. The first twelve lines of these rhyme alternately; the last two with one another. Each line contains ten syllables, five of which are accented, making five — — "feet".

V. VITAIĀ LAMPADA

(a) *Kaeness*—no shirking or slackness, but doing our very best; (b) *Fairness*—no sneaking or taking of mean advantages; (c) *Unselfishness*—doing the right for right's sake, not for hope of reward: these are three of the great moral lessons taught by life at our

public schools, such as Clifton, where the writer of this poem was educated. The poem interprets the best spirit of English school life, and enforces its lessons. The refrain "Play up, play up, and play the game" is a good motto to set always before ourselves. The title means "The Torch of Life" (*Vitāi* has three syllables, all long—*Lampādā* has the first long and the other two short). In old times there used to be races between competing teams with lighted torches. Each member of the team had to carry the torch a certain distance and hand it on, unextinguished, to the next member; the team won, whose last member first brought the torch, still lighted, to the goal. In the same way each member of the school hands on to those who come after him these lessons of pluck, honesty, unselfishness, and strenuousness.

Verse 1 describes a boy at school playing in the cricket eleven. He has to go in at a critical moment, and the winning or losing of the match depends on him. He tries his hardest, not from a selfish desire to get his colours, but for the sake of the school. Picture the green playing-field, the game proceeding in the middle, the ring of eager spectators round it. The state of the ground and the glare of the sinking sun make it difficult for the batsman. The last man is going in; if he fails, the match is lost; the captain encourages him to do his best.

In verse 2 the boy has become a young officer. He is scarcely more than a boy yet, but the lesson of pluck and endurance for the common good, which he has learned at school, saves his regiment at a critical moment, and encourages the men to fight on. Picture the battle—one of those in the first Soudan war of 1884 and 1885, when the charge of the dervishes once or twice broke a British square—as it did recently in Somaliland. The yellow sand of the desert is red with the blood of the fallen, the square is broken, the men are disheartened by the death of their colonel, and are on the point of giving way, when the whole body would be overwhelmed and slaughtered—but the young subaltern by his brave deeds and cheering words rallies them, and saves the day.

In verse 3 the picture of the torch race is brought before us. The runners carry the torch over the space allotted to them, and when this is done hand it on to their successors, and fall exhausted.

1. *The Close* = the school cricket-ground.

3. *The pitch* (the piece of ground between the wickets) is so

hard that the ball "bumps", *i.e.* rises high from the ground when bowled.

5. *For the sake of a ribboned coat: i.e.* to get his colours, get into the eleven.

11. The *Gatling*, quick-firing gun; its place is now taken by the Maxim. It has "jammed", *i.e.* stuck. It will not work, and is useless.

13. Death is spoken of as a river; just as a river in flood-time overflows, and covers the surrounding country, so Death is going to overwhelm and carry away the men now fighting. It has "brimmed its banks", risen to the brim or top of them, and is just on the point of overflowing.

14. The men are tired and disheartened: they almost forget England, for whose honour they are fighting; honour indeed does not appeal to them; each thinks of himself. They have forgotten what it is to "play the game".

23. The "torch" is the lesson of unselfishness, pluck, and perseverance, which each man hands on to all who come after him—not to one only, as in the actual torch race.

Metre.—Each line contains four accented syllables, and therefore four "feet". Each foot is either $\sim\sim-$, $\sim-$, or $-$. Notice how the preponderance of short syllables suits the rapid thrilling narrative of verses 1 and 2. On the other hand, in five of the eight lines of verse 3 the first foot consists of a single long syllable, while the total number of short syllables is considerably less than in verse 1 or 2. A more deliberate tone is the result. We linger over and emphasize the lesson which the verse expounds.

VI. HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

These lines interpret to us the fresh beauty of an English spring-time in the country—the sprouting of the tender leaves, the blossoming of the fruit-trees, the flowers in the fields, the glad singing of the birds, and the building of their nests. These joyous sights and sounds are the common property of those who live in the country, or even in the suburbs of a great town, yet by many they are scarcely noticed. Children may be induced by such poems as this to take an interest in and watch for the events which each spring brings round. They can know the appearance of an elm-

tree and notice the shooting of its leaves; the pear-tree and its white blossom can be familiar to them; they can see the chaffinch and the whitethroat, the swallow and the thrush, and learn to distinguish the notes of the different birds. If their attention is not drawn to these sights and sounds, they may remain quite ignorant of them, though living in their midst: even the thrush and the swallow, the elm-tree and the pear-tree, may be simply names to them, as they must be, alas, to the children who have to grow up in the slums of our great towns with never a chance of experiencing the wholesome sights and sounds of country life. Descriptions of trees and flowers and birds are of little use. Pictures are not much more satisfactory. The teacher in the country *can* secure that the words are made real to the children; in the towns it is difficult to make them mean anything, or indeed to give any glimmering of the poet's thoughts and enthusiasm to those who are entirely without experience of what he is describing. [London children can be taken to the Natural History Museum to see the excellent collection of stuffed British birds, with their actual surroundings reproduced.]

The poet is writing from Italy, and thinks longingly of the beauties of England in April.

1. *Oh, to be* = Would that I could be, I wish I could be.

4. *unaware*; he has not noticed it coming.

5. *sheaf* = a bundle—here a collection of twigs or shrubs.

11. Try to picture the pear-tree, which forms part of the hedge dividing the orchard from a field. It leans outwards towards the field, and its blossoms and the raindrops which cling to it fall upon the clover in the field.

13. The thrush is perched on the very end of the *spray* or twig, which is *bent* by his weight.

14. Notice whether this is true of the thrush.

15, 16. The joyous song of the bird seems so carelessly sung that you might be tempted to think he could not repeat it accurately.

17. *hoary*—the dew upon the grass giving a tint of white to its green.

19. *dower* = 'what is given to' the little children—their special possession, of which they are so fond.

20. The colour of the melon flower, which is seen in Italy, is staring; the quieter brightness of the buttercup is pleasanter.

Metre.—The metre is irregular. Lines 1-4 contain each three accented syllables—

— — | — — | — —
 — — | — — | — —
 — — | — — | — — | — —
 — — | — — | — —

Lines 5-7 have four accented syllables—

— — — | — — | — — — | — —

Line 8 only two—

— — | — —

Lines 9, 10 have again four—

— — | — — | — — | — —
 — — — | — — — | — — — | — —

The rest of the poem (except line 16) consists of ordinary five "foot" lines—five accented syllables. Line 16 has only three—

— — | — — | — — | — —

VII. FROM THE ODE TO A SKYLARK

The famous poem from which these verses are taken describes the joyousness of the lark's song as it soars in the air. To the slum child who has never heard the lark sing, and only knows its appearance—if he knows it at all—from a picture in his school, it can unfortunately have but little meaning. One, however, who lives in the country is familiar with the lark's song and with the sights and sounds of nature to which allusion is made, and it should not be impossible for him to appreciate to some extent the beauty of the lines.

1. The poet listening to the joyous song of the bird fancies it to be some spirit that sings incessantly because it is so happy. Its "blithe" (*i.e.* gay, merry) heart is full of joy which it keeps pouring out in "profuse" (abundant, never-failing) song, the beauty of which is "unpremeditated" (*i.e.* not artificial or elaborately prepared, but altogether natural).

8. It is difficult to see how the lark can be said to be like a cloud of fire, except that as flames dart upwards, so does the lark.

9. *the blue deep* = the depth of the blue sky.

11, 12. The gray-blue twilight is said to be "pale purple". Everything is indistinct, and the bird cannot be clearly seen in the half-light, in which objects are blurred, and seem to melt into the surrounding atmosphere, instead of being sharply defined.

13-15. Just as in broad daylight a star cannot be seen, though it is in a certain position in the heavens, so the lark may be invisible, though we hear it singing. Country children will know the truth of this.

16-20. When the moon comes out from behind a cloud its light seems to flood the sky: just in the same way the joyous song of the lark fills the whole heaven.

21-25. *Thy music* is of course the subject of the sentence, and all that comes before it is the object of *doth surpass*.

The rain in spring-time makes the flowers and grass shoot up, joyous and full of life. Why is the grass called "twinkling"? (Because of the shining of the drops on it, or its movement as the rain strikes it.)

Notice and try to see with the mind's eye the familiar natural scenes spoken of in verses 3, 4, and 5.

26-35. The poet envies the lark its power of singing so freely and happily: he feels that if he could sing in the same way everyone would be bound to listen to him.

26. *measures* = verses.

30. The lark, because it flies so high, is said to scorn the ground.

33. *harmonious madness* = inspired music.

Metre.—Lines 1 and 3 in each verse have six syllables, lines 2 and 4 only five: but in each there are three accented, lines 1 and 3 being—

— — | — — | — —

Lines 2 and 4—

— — | — — | —

Line 5 has twelve syllables, six "feet"—

— — | — — | — — | — — | — — | — —

VIII. DAFFODILS

This little poem is eminently calculated both to stimulate the imagination and to arouse a love for the beauty of Nature. The daffodil, too, is a flower with which all children can be familiar, though those who live in towns may not have seen it growing. The poet is on a lonely walk, perhaps depressed from want of company, when all at once he is cheered by the sight of the daffodils; and afterwards he often recalls the beautiful vision and

gets much pleasure from thinking of it. Picture the scene—a lake bordered by trees, beneath which are the daffodils.

Note the play of imagination—the lonely wanderer compared to a cloud (line 1); the daffodils to a host (line 4); they and the waves are said to dance with joy (lines 6, 12, 13); they are likened to the Milky Way (lines 7, 8). Note, too, how the sound fits the sense in lines 6, 12, 17.

1. What sort of clouds are seen floating alone?

4. What is the metaphor in “host”? Why “golden”?

6. Notice how the number of short syllables in this line suggests the rapid movement of the flowers in the breeze. For other examples of the sound suiting the sense compare pieces xiii, lines 14–16, &c.; xvii, lines 7–10, &c.; xix, line 2, &c.; xxiv; xxviii, line 44, &c.

7, 8. Just as the countless stars in the Milky Way seem blurred into one confused mass, so the separate flowers are indistinguishable, and appear as one great mass of yellow.

9, 11. “never-ending” and “ten thousand” must not, of course, be taken literally.

13, 14. What is meant by the waves “dancing”? How can they and the flowers be said to show “glee”?

16. What effect, then, did the sight of the daffodils and waves have upon the poet?

17. Notice, again, how the long vowels slowly pronounced in “I gazed and gazed” indicate the long-continued gaze.

18. What sort of “wealth” is meant here?

19–22. When we are alone and our mind is unoccupied (“vacant”) we often think and dream about pleasures which we have had in the past. We seem to see them again in this dreaming or reflection, which is thus called the “inward eye”, and is said to be the “bliss of solitude”, because we get so much pleasure from it, when we might be dull and melancholy, being alone and unoccupied.

Metre.—There are four accented syllables, and therefore four “feet” in each line—usually they are — —, but in lines 6 and 12 the accented syllable comes first in the first foot. Lines 1 and 3, 2 and 4, 5 and 6 in each verse rhyme.

IX. A FOREST BY THE SEA

(From *The Recollection*)

A simple and beautiful description of a pine forest by the sea. After reading the poem, try to realize the scene in imagination—the forest of dark pines close to the calm sea, their stems and branches twisted by previous storms to all sorts of fantastic shapes, the snow-covered mountains in the distance, the pools reflecting the trees and grass, the perfect peace of everything. Notice also the play of fancy throughout—the wind, as it is not blowing, is said to be in its nest (l. 3), the storm in its home (l. 4), the waves asleep (l. 5), the clouds at play (l. 6), the bright surface of the sea is smiling (l. 8), the pines are giants (l. 14), their twisted trunks and branches are like serpents (l. 16), the tree-tops are like waves (l. 22), the snow-covered mountains are a sea (l. 33), the pools are like a sky in which the forests, reflected in them, seem to grow (l. 39).

9-12. The scene was so perfect in its beauty that it seemed to come from heaven.

14. *waste* = wild, desolate land.

15. *tortured* = twisted.

17. *azure*—a favourite word of Shelley: it means really 'blue', but he seems to use it in the sense of 'bright', 'clear', 'fresh'.

17-20. The colours of the trees harmonized with one another as beautifully as those of the sky.

29. *inviolable quietness* = stillness that seemed as if it could not be broken. There appeared to be a magic spell over the scene (l. 36).

37, &c. The pools in the forest reflected the trees, and made them seem even more beautiful than they were.

55. *imaged* = pictured, represented.

57. *interfused* = penetrated, pervaded. The glow was everywhere.

58. *elysian* = heavenly.

Metre.—There are four accented syllables, and therefore four "feet" in lines 1, 3, and the succeeding odd numbers—three in lines 2, 4, and other even numbers. The feet consist of — —, but occasionally in the first foot the accent falls on the first syllable, so that we have instead — —.

X. FROM LINES WRITTEN NEAR TINTERN ABBEY

These are the opening lines of one of Wordsworth's most famous poems about Nature. It was written when he was on the banks of the river Wye, a few miles above Tintern Abbey, in the summer of the year 1798. Tintern Abbey is a beautiful ruin, between Monmouth and Chepstow. These lines first describe the scene, and then dwell on the same idea as is expressed in "Daffodils" (viii), viz.: that the delight obtained from beautiful scenes is not limited to the actual time when we are seeing them, but that often afterwards, under far different circumstances, "they flash upon the inward eye", and the remembrance of them gives the greatest pleasure and comfort. Try to picture the scene, as described in the first twenty-three lines.

4. The tides do not affect the river a little way above Tintern, so the murmur of its waters there is said to be "inland".

6, 7. *secluded*. The scene is already quiet, but the cliffs seem to shut it in still more, and make one think it even more secluded than it is.

7, 8. The cliffs rising straight up seem to connect the quiet scene below with the quiet sky above, thus adding to the impression of peacefulness.

10. *sycamore*. See that there is clear knowledge of the appearance of a sycamore tree and leaf.

11. *tufis* = thickets, little patches of woodland—an orchard being, of course, an enclosure of fruit-bearing trees.

13. The apples, pears, &c., being still unripe—it was early in July—were green, so that woods, orchards, and grass were all alike green; no other colour "disturbed" the landscape. A "copse" is much the same as a thicket, or patch of wood.

16, 17. The hedges were not trim and artificial, but seemed as wild and natural as the rest of the plants and bushes, running here and there anyhow in a sort of playful "sportive" way, instead of in an orderly pattern.

17. *pastoral* = belonging to shepherds, *i.e.* altogether rustic, countrified.

20. The little farms were so hidden away among the green foliage that you hardly noticed the smoke rising from them. No

house was visible: the smoke seemed as if it might come from some gipsy encampment or hermit's cave.

25. *as is a landscape*, &c., *i.e.* non-existent. The blind man, who has never seen the landscape, cannot imagine in the least what it is like.

30, 31. These were not mere momentary feelings, but they passed into the poet's mind, *i.e.* he thought about them, reflected over them, and they soothed and "restored" or refreshed him. *With tranquil restoration* then = with soothing and healing power.

32, &c. *unremembered* = vaguely remembered — a feeling of contentedness and satisfaction, which naturally produces kindness to others; so that the pleasure caused by such scenes and the remembrance of them makes our lives better and more unselfish.

34-36. It is not in any great or heroic actions that goodness consists, so much as in the constant doing of small acts of kindness, which are forgotten at once and never mentioned. These are "the best portion of a good man's life", and these "little nameless unremembered acts of kindness" can be done constantly by everybody, however humble his situation.

Metre.—"Blank verse", *i.e.* unrhymed lines of ten syllables, the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th syllables being accented, so that there are five — — "feet". Occasionally — — is substituted for — — in the first foot.

XI. SUMMER AND WINTER

The poem describes in simple and beautiful language two contrasted scenes—a summer and a winter day—which should be familiar to country children, and which they should try to recall in imagination. The lesson of pity for the sufferings of others is suggested in the last line.

3. *congregates* = gathers together.

4. The frequent resemblance of clouds to mountains is familiar.

6. *like eternity*. The blue sky beyond the clouds seems boundless.

9. *glanced* = waved to and fro.

Metre.—There are five accented syllables in each line, and therefore five "feet". As a rule each foot consists of — —, but in

line 2 the third foot is — — (in the sūn), and in line 3 the accented syllable alone forms the first foot (whēn). The pairs of lines rhyme.

XII. FROM THE ODE TO THE WEST WIND

A scene familiar in autumn is here suggested—the wind stripping the dead leaves from the trees, and whirling them hither and thither. The poet addresses the west wind as if it were a person. Notice, too, the play of imagination in the dead leaves being compared to ghosts (l. 3), and pestilence-stricken multitudes (l. 5); in the seeds buried in the ground during the winter being like corpses in their graves (l. 8); in the warm wind of spring summoning them to life being compared to a trumpet rousing them (l. 10); and in the buds being likened to flocks feeding (l. 11).

1. The prevailing wind in autumn is west, so it is said to be the "breath of Autumn's being".

4. The various colours of the leaves are those of disease and death; *hectic* = the unhealthy red of consumptive people.

6. *chariotest* = drivest. Not only does the wind blow off the dead leaves, but also the seeds, which are scattered over the ground, and buried there till the spring-time.

9. *azure* (compare ix. 17) = bright, clear, fresh.

10. The soft, bright, balmy wind of spring-time is represented as blowing a clarion or trumpet to rouse the earth out of its winter sleep, and make the seeds put forth buds and flowers.

Metre.—There are five accented syllables in each line; the "feet" are usually — —, but occasionally the first is — —.

XIII. ENGLAND

(From *Richard II.* Act II, Scene 1)

These famous lines, taken from Shakespeare's play of *King Richard II.*, are supposed to be spoken by John of Gaunt, the king's uncle, upon his death-bed. The old man is grieving over the folly of his nephew, and foresees that ruin and shame will result from it to the land which he loves so well, and of which he is so proud. Such a poem as this should inspire us with love of England, and pride in her natural beauty, her strength, and her

splendid history. The piece contains a great wealth of fancy, image after image being used in speaking of England.

1. Gaunt thinks first of the great kings, Edward I and his own father, Edward III, under whom England has won great glory in war (under Edward I against Wales and Scotland; under Edward III against France at Crecy and Poitiers).

sceptre = a king's staff, the sign of his power. So a "sceptered isle" is an island ruled by a king.

2. *earth of majesty* = majestic, glorious land.

Mars. The ancient Greeks and Romans believed not only in one supreme God, but in a variety of lesser gods, who were concerned with some special form of human activity. The god of war was called by the Romans Mars, so that "seat of Mars" = warlike country.

3. Then Gaunt speaks of the natural beauty of England. Children should be able to see why a beautiful land is called "Eden" and "Paradise".

demi-Paradise = half-Paradise, almost a Paradise.

4, 5. Next the strength of England is referred to, due to its being separated by the sea from other lands, so that it is difficult for enemies to invade it, and infectious disease does not so readily obtain an entrance.

But had any "infection" lately come in?—Yes, the "Black Death" in Edward III's reign.

When did the sea, in later times, specially protect England from invasion?—When Napoleon attempted it.

6. It is a little world in itself, cut off from the rest of the world.

7-9. Then comes the exquisite image of England as a precious stone, "set" or fixed, not in a metal but in the sea. Why is "silver" a specially appropriate word for the sea? Why is it said to be a wall and a moat? Tennyson similarly speaks of England as "compassed by (*i.e.* surrounded by) the inviolate sea".

10. *less happier* = less happy.

12. Notice Gaunt's love of his country and its inhabitants.

14-16. His sense of its strength and grandeur comes out again in these majestic lines, where the sea is represented not this time as protecting England, but as imprisoning it, and striving to overwhelm it with its tumultuous waves—besieging it, but in vain.

Neptune was to the Romans the god of the sea, just as Mars (l. 2) was the god of war.

16. Such is the land, so beautiful, so strong, which, Gaunt says, is being ruined by a weak and foolish king—"is now bound in with (fettered by) shame".

Metre.—"Blank verse", *i.e.* unrhymed lines of ten syllables, the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th syllables being accented, so that the line falls into five — — "feet". Occasionally the first foot is — — (*e.g.* lines 13, 14), and in line 11 there is an additional short syllable at the end. (In the last line "Neptune is" must be pronounced almost as "Neptune's", or there will be a syllable too many:—

"Ōf wāt' | ry Nēpt | ūne's nōw | bound īn | wīth shāme".)

XIV. GREEN FIELDS OF ENGLAND

This little poem, written during a voyage made by Clough to America in 1852, is a simple and beautiful expression of the love of home and family and native land, which the traveller feels all the more deeply when he is far away from them.

2. *watery waste* = the wide lonely ocean.

9. *fast* = secure.

11. When he is safe home again, the past when he was far away from all he loved will seem as nothing.

Metre.—There are four accented syllables in each line, making four — — "feet". All the lines in each verse rhyme.

XV. HENRY V BEFORE AGINCOURT

In 1415 King Henry V landed with an army at the mouth of the river Seine, in the north of France. He was continuing the "Hundred Years' War", begun in the reign of his great-grandfather, Edward III, and caused by the English kings' claim to the throne of France. Henry captured the town of Harfleur, and marched eastwards towards Calais. The French army, much superior in numbers, barred his way at Agincourt, but he completely defeated it. This extract from Shakespeare's play describes a scene just before the battle. The Earl of Westmoreland, one of Henry's commanders, utters a wish for more men, that their chances of beating the French might be greater. Henry replies that they do not want more. If they lose there will be fewer to be killed; and if they win, as he expects, the honour will be all

the greater from their small numbers. It is the speech of a brave man, encouraging his troops by picturing to them the glory of taking part in such a fight.

5. *marked* = set apart, doomed.

enow = enough.

6. *to do our country loss* = *i.e.* we are quite enough men for our country to lose.

8, 9, 15, 16. "God's will", "By Jove", "faith", "God's peace" are exclamations.

11. *it yearns me not* = I do not care, or fret.

15. *cos* = cousin.

16, 17. *I would not lose*, &c. If even one man more shared the honour with me it would not be so great. I should lose some of it, and this I would not like to do even to obtain what I hope for most.

20. *hath no stomach to* = has not inclination or courage for.

21. *passport* = permission to travel, a written document necessary in a hostile or foreign country.

22. *crowns for convoy* = money to pay the expenses of the journey.

24. *fellowship to die*—these words go together. The line means 'who fears to be our companion in death, to share it with us'.

25. Oct. 25th was the day: it is the Feast, *i.e.* the day set apart in honour of two early martyrs, St. Crispin and St. Crispinian or Crispian.

27. *a tip-toe* = on tip-toe. "Stand a tip-toe" = become proud and excited.

30. *vigil* = day before.

34, 35. He will forget everything but this: but he will not forget what he did in the battle, he will remember it "with advantages", *i.e.* with additions, making it out more than it really was.

38, 39. The names of the nobles who were with King Henry.

40. *in their flowing cups* = as they drink freely at the feast.

47. *vile* = low-born.

48. *gentle his condition* = give him the rank of gentleman.

51. *hold their manhoods cheap* = think themselves a poor sort of men, compared with those who fought in this great fight.

whiles = while.

Metre.—"Blank verse", *i.e.* unrhymed lines of ten syllables, the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th syllables being accented, so that the line falls into five — "feet". Occasionally — — takes the place of — — in the first foot, and sometimes there is an additional short syllable at the end, *e.g.* in lines 4, 7, 13, 15, &c.

XVI. HOME THOUGHTS FROM THE SEA

These seven lines were written by Browning when he was at sea, off the coast of the extreme south of Spain. From his ship he could see four places connected with glorious events in English history—Cape St. Vincent, Cadiz, Trafalgar, and Gibraltar—and the sight of them inspires him to think of the grandeur of England, and the duty of every Englishman and Englishwoman to maintain that grandeur. We ought to have a map, and notice the course of the ship as it sails towards Gibraltar. The poet speaks as if he could see all four places at the same time, at sunset. But this is impossible, as Cape St. Vincent is 200 miles from Gibraltar.

1. *Cape St. Vincent* is away to the north-west. What is meant by its "dying away"? It is so distant that it cannot be seen clearly, and, as the light becomes dimmer and dimmer, it seems to fade away. It is associated with the great victory of Jervis over the Spanish fleet in 1797—a victory really due to Nelson.

2. *Cadiz* is, of course, connected with Drake, who in 1587 "sing'd the King of Spain's beard" there, burning his ships and stores, and delaying for a year the sailing of the Armada. Cadiz, too, was taken in 1596 by Raleigh, Howard, and Essex.

Why is the sunset spoken of as blood-red? Recall the appearance of the sky at sunset, and notice the appropriateness of the word "reeking" in connection with the "blood-red" sky.

3. *Trafalgar Bay* was the scene of Nelson's great victory over the combined French and Spanish fleets on Oct. 21st, 1805. Napoleon's power on the sea was completely crushed, and Nelson himself was killed during the battle.

The red sunset light makes the water seem to be on fire: it is said to be "burning", and Cape Trafalgar standing in the midst of it seems blue.

4. *Gibraltar*, on the other hand, away to the east, is out of the light of the setting sun, and appears gray. In the evening twilight

it is dimly visible, as it would be in the early morning, before the daylight had fully come. So it is said to "dawn", *i.e.* to come dimly into view.

Gibraltar was taken by the English in 1704, and held by Elliott during a three years' siege (1779-1782) against French and Spanish: since then it has always belonged to Great Britain.

5. Then comes the lesson which can be enlarged upon. Each of these places is the scene of some great deed done by Englishmen in the past—men who have made England what she is. They helped us; we are a free and great nation because of what they did; so we must, each one of us, do our best, whatever our station, to help England, not to disgrace her. There is no Jingoism in such patriotism as that. Let us praise God that England is what she is, and pray that she may not fall through any unworthiness of ours.

Try, then, (*a*) to realize this lesson, (*b*) to picture the scene vividly—Cape St. Vincent dimly outlined in the distance, the sea round Cadiz and Trafalgar red in the light of the setting sun, Cape Trafalgar standing out "bluish" in the midst of it, and Gibraltar to the east gray and cold, while behind, over Africa, the planet Jupiter (Jove's planet, line 7) is rising.

Metre.—All the lines rhyme, and in each there are eight accented syllables—the line falling into seven — "feet" and one long syllable, with a break after the fourth foot, thus:

— — | — — | — — | — — || — — | — — | — — | —

XVII. YE MARINERS OF ENGLAND

This very spirited song was written just at the time when British sailors under Nelson had won many victories and much glory in the great war against Napoleon. By keeping the command of the sea they had prevented him from carrying out his plan of invading England, it being impossible for him to get his troops safely across the Channel. Nelson was killed at his crowning victory of Trafalgar in 1805. This song seems to have been written in 1807, when a new danger threatened, the Russians in alliance with Napoleon having declared war against England.

Notice how the last four lines of each of the first three verses by their sound and metre suggest and seem to exult in the

noise of storm and battle: in the last verse these lines are more quiet, indicating the dying away of both storm and battle, as peace returns.

Note the play of imagination especially in lines 11, 12, 23, 25, 31, 33, 34.

Verse 1 reminds the sailors of the flag—the Union Jack—of which all are so proud.

3. *a thousand years*. England had been a nation for over a thousand years, though her flag had not been the same all the time.

braved = held out against. However severe the storms or however strong the enemy, ships under the British flag have sailed the seas unconquered.

6. *to match* = to fight against.

another foe, i.e. Russia.

7. *sweep* gives the idea of the irresistible power of the British navy.

Verse 2 reminds the sailors of the great deeds done by Englishmen in the past, and inspires them to follow their example.

11–14. The sea is pictured as being full of the spirits of the many Englishmen who have fought and fallen in battle upon it, and have been buried in it: these will rise up to encourage their descendants.

15. Nelson and Blake were the two greatest of English sailors. Blake defeated the Dutch and Spaniards in Cromwell's time.

Verse 3 reminds the sailors that Britain, as an island, is defended not by walls and forts, but by her navy. Englishmen being surrounded by the sea have often to go upon it, and so are more at home there than other nations which are not obliged to use it. Compare with this verse the lines from Shakespeare (xiii), where the silver sea is said to serve England as a wall or moat.

21. *bulwarks* = walls, fortifications.

22. *towers* = forts.

steep = cliff, steep coast.

23. The huge waves of the stormy sea are compared to mountains. Britannia—the country of Britain, spoken of as a person—is said to march over them.

25. *thunders*, i.e. the noise of the guns.

native oak, i.e. the ships built of British oak.

31-34. Why "meteor" flag? A meteor (shooting-star) is swift-moving and bright, and causes terror (terrific): so the flag of England on her ships moves swiftly about striking dread into her enemies, till peace returns. Peace is figured as a quiet morning-star shining steadily after a stormy night.

Metre.—Lines 3, 5, 9 in each verse have four accented syllables—four — "feet"—lines 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 three. Line 1 has three, there being an extra short syllable after the last accented one. Line 7 has a striking change to two feet, the two accented syllables rhyming. There are really two short lines in one, and the effect is startling and rousing. In the last four lines — — — is frequently substituted for — —. It is particularly suited to rapid animated speech. (Compare pieces v, xix, xxx.)

XVIII. FROM THE ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

Two great men led the British in the long struggle against the French emperor, Napoleon, which took place at the beginning of the last century. Nelson defeated the French constantly at sea, and finally crushed their power there in the battle of Trafalgar (October, 1805), at which he was killed. Wellington, in the long Peninsular War in Spain and Portugal, won a series of victories over Napoleon's land forces, and conquered the Emperor himself at the battle of Waterloo (June, 1815). Wellington lived for more than thirty-seven years after his great victory, and died at Walmer Castle in 1852, at the age of eighty-three. He was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral, beside Nelson, who is supposed to speak the first three lines of this piece (an extract from a longer poem), asking who is disturbing his rest.

Note how frequently the sound of the lines fits the sense, e.g. line 21 (the impetuous attack against superior numbers), line 26 (the slow building-up of the elaborate defences), lines 31, 32 (the repeated blows driving the French back), lines 36, 37 (the noise of battle and pursuit).

1-3. Wellington received a great public funeral, soldiers from every British regiment, as well as many from foreign armies, attending.

8. The drums were "muffled", *i.e.* draped with black cloth to deaden the sound, and make a low sad noise, in sign of mourning.

4, 10. "who" must be understood between "he" and "was".

14. *gorgeous rites*, *i.e.* the magnificent funeral ceremony in his honour.

20. *myriads* = countless, very large, numbers. In 1803, Wellington was in India, where his brother was Governor-General. He won the battle of Assaye against tremendous odds, defeating with only 7000 men the Mahrattas of the West Deccan, who had some 40,000.

22. *underneath another sun*, *i.e.* in another land, viz. Spain and Portugal, where he received the chief command against the French in 1809. Napoleon was trying to conquer the country, and we helped the Spanish and Portuguese against him. At first Wellington had to act on the defensive, and constructed the famous fortifications or lines of Torres Vedras round Lisbon. There were three of them, so that if one were taken he could retire behind the next. The French, however, never took the first, and their army gradually wasted away in front of it.

25. *treble* = threefold.

26. *labour'd* = built with much labour.

27. *at bay* = defending himself desperately.

28-38. At last Wellington was able himself to attack the French, and in a series of battles he defeated them and drove them across the Pyrenees, winning a final victory at Toulouse, after Napoleon had already given up the throne. A map of Spain and Portugal should be used to trace Wellington's progress.

30. The vines growing in this southern land were "wasted", *i.e.* destroyed by the invading armies.

40. In 1815 Napoleon escaped from the island of Elba, to which he had been banished, made himself Emperor again, and quickly gathered an army. He marched to Belgium, intending to divide and defeat separately the British and Prussians, who were trying to join one another. On Sunday, June 18th, he attacked the British under Wellington at Waterloo, a few miles from Brussels, but was unable to drive them from their position, and in the evening the Prussians came up and turned his defeat into a rout. Soon afterwards he gave himself up to the British, and was sent

to the island of St. Helena, where he remained as a prisoner until his death in 1821.

33, 40. The eagle is the standard of France, carried by her armies, as our regiments used to carry their colours into battle. Notice how the word "flew" is used in line 33, as if a real bird were spoken of; and again, in lines 40, 41, it is called "ravening", as a real eagle might be, and its wings are said to "shadow" or cover Europe, as it soars over it, seeking for prey. In line 42 the comparison is abruptly changed, and France is spoken of as a dog barking for its food. Napoleon had conquered several European countries, and set up his own relatives as their kings.

43. Wellington sought no golden kingly crowns, as Napoleon did; only the reward or crown of doing his duty—a difficult and not a showy task, so the crown is called an "iron" one. Compare with this line, xxv ("Wages").

44. *loud*. Why? From the noise of the guns and battle.

Sabbath. June 18, 1815, was a Sunday.

45-47. The French cavalry charged again and again against the English troops, who were drawn up in squares, but could not break them. They are compared to waves dashing themselves vainly against hard rocks, and being broken into scattered foam, without moving the rocks—a fine image.

49. The day had been dull and wet, and the air had been "troubled" with the noise and dirt and smoke of battle. Towards evening, as the Prussians approached, a ray of sunshine appeared, which cheered the British; and when the French had failed in their final attack, the whole British line charged them in turn, and put them to flight.

54. The final shaking to pieces of Napoleon's great power, by his crushing defeat at Waterloo, was so important that it might well be called a "world-earthquake".

56. *craven guile* = cowardice and trickery.

57. *the silver-coasted isle*, i.e. Britain, surrounded by the silver sea. Compare xiii, "this precious stone set in the silver sea".

58. Nelson's two chief victories before Trafalgar had been at the Nile (1798) and Copenhagen, the "battle of the Baltic" (1801).

64. *in full acclaim*, i.e. speaking of him with all honour.

66. The fame which a man wins is echoed constantly by all the people talking of him, and this is a proof of its reality.

68. *civic revel* = rejoicings of citizens.

Metre.—The lines are of varying length. Most of them have four accented syllables, but in lines 10, 64, 65 there are only two, and in lines 6, 7, 41, 43, 44, 47, 51, 56, 57, 58, 61, 62, 63, 70 there are five. As a rule each accented syllable is preceded by one short one, making a — “foot”, but in the first foot the accented syllable frequently stands alone, *e.g.* lines 4, 8, 14, 17, 19, &c. Sometimes, too, the foot is — —, *e.g.* the second feet of lines 8, 21, the last foot of line 35, &c. The first three lines of the piece have a different rhythm from the others: perhaps it is simplest to take them as having each four accented syllables:

Who is hē | that cōm | eth, līke an hōn | our'd gūest,
 With bān | ner and with mūs | ic, with sōl | dier and with prīest,
 With a nā | tion weep | ing, and break | ing on my rēst?

XIX. HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX

This is a most vivid description of a hurried ride, a race against time. Ghent is in Belgium, and Aix-la-Chapelle just beyond its eastern border, in Germany. The two places are over a hundred miles apart, as the crow flies. The date of the ride is given as 16—, some time in the seventeenth century, when the country belonged to the Spanish; but the incident is purely imaginary. Some news had to be taken to Aix within a certain time, to save the town “from her fate”. Those who know Greek history will at once recall the story of Mitylene (Mit-i-lee-nee), the town in the island of Lesbos which revolted from Athens in 428 B.C. It was retaken, and the Athenians in their anger sent orders to massacre all the inhabitants. Next day, however, they repented, and sent another ship to cancel the order; and by great efforts on the part of the oarsmen this arrived just in time to save the people. We may suppose that the message which the three riders in this poem were carrying to Aix was of a similar kind; or it may be, as line 58 seems to suggest, that they were bringing news of relief to a starving city on the point of surrender.

The poem was written while Browning was at sea, and his fancy gladly turned to the pleasure of a gallop on his good horse. It carries us along breathlessly, and makes us feel as if we were

taking part in this exciting ride. Three men set out—Dirck on his mare Roos, which collapsed at Hasselt, about two-thirds of the way; Joris on his roan horse, which fell dead within sight of Aix; and the teller of the story on his favourite horse Roland, who succeeded in getting through. Have a map, and note the places mentioned and their distances apart.

2. Notice the sound fitting the sense, here and elsewhere.

3. *Good-speed!* = good-luck! The “watch” is the watchman at the gates of Ghent as they passed out.

undrew = were drawn back, unbolted. Why did towns have gates and walls in those days?

5. *postern* = small gate.

The lights (of Ghent) “sank to rest”, *i.e.* disappeared, as they left it behind.

10. *pique* = peak, the fore-part of the saddle.

See that the meaning of cheek-strap, bit, stirrup, and saddle-girths is understood.

23, 24. Note the image. The morning mist is cloven, cut in two, by the horse making his way through it, just as the spray is thrown off from some headland against which the sea is dashing.

26. *pricked out on his track* = stretched out in the direction in which he was going.

29. *spume* = foam.

Notice the vivid pictures of the brave intelligent horse in this verse, and the dying mare in the next.

39. The sun is “pitiless”, there being no cloud to break its fierceness.

43. *roan* = a horse of a reddish or yellow-brown colour.

44. *neck and crop* = bodily, altogether.

49. *buffcoat* = a light-yellow leather coat.

holster = a leather pistol-case, carried at the front of the saddle.

50. *jackboots* = large boots reaching up over the knee.

Metre.—The metre is much the same as in v. In each line there are four accented syllables, the “feet” being either — — — or — —. The great number of short syllables makes the sound of the lines suggest the breathless haste of the ride which they describe. Lines 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6 of each verse rhyme.

XX. ON HIS BLINDNESS

Milton became blind in 1652, when he was 44 years of age. The immediate cause of his blindness was his hard work upon a Latin pamphlet defending the English people against an attack made upon them for the execution of King Charles I: he went on working though his eyesight was failing, deliberately sacrificing it to serve his country. The active man, made helpless by his blindness, naturally is impatient, but he consoles himself with the thought that what men can actually accomplish is nothing in the sight of God: it is not what they do, but the way in which they bear their lot, whatever it may be, which makes them God's servants. Some have to lead an active life, others simply to be patient and bear the weakness from which they suffer: both alike are God's servants—a consoling thought for the weak and those unable to do any great thing.

1. *my light is spent*, i.e. 'my sight is gone'.

3. *that one talent*, i.e. his power of writing.

Understand 'it' between "which" and "is".

4. Understand 'is' between "soul" and "more bent".

5, 6. *present my true account* = give a satisfactory account. Reference is of course made in lines 3-6 to the parable of the talents.

7. This line is the question which is the object of "ask" in line 8.

Understand 'being' between "light" and "denied".

8. *fondly* = foolishly.

11. *his state*, i.e. the manner in which He lives.

13. *post* = travel quickly.

Metre.—This is a sonnet, and consists therefore of fourteen lines. Lines 1, 4, 5, 8 rhyme; also lines 2, 3, 6, 7; lines 9 and 12, 10 and 13, 11 and 14.

Each line has ten syllables, the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th being accented, making five — — "feet".

XXI. AULD LANG SYNE

The tune of "Auld Lang Syne" is probably more familiar to British people than any other except that of the National Anthem, and shares with it the power to stir the feelings even of those to

whom music does not generally appeal. Our love of our country and pride in its greatness are aroused and recalled when we hear "God Save the King"; doggerel though the words be, the music, with all its associations, moves us strangely. The words of "Auld Lang Syne", on the other hand, are not only set to a simple and beautiful air, which has the same power of moving us, but are in themselves full of pathos and poetry, and express feelings which are more universal and touch us more closely than even that of patriotism. The poem describes the meeting of two friends who have been long parted, and, while they drink together, clasp hands, and recall the happy days of childhood. We all tend to look back with regret on old times; we forget what was unpleasant, and remember only the happiness which accompanied them—happiness which often seems, now that they are gone for ever, far greater than it really was. Regret for the days of long ago, the sadness of parting, and the joy of meeting again—these are such universal experiences, that it is small wonder that a song in which they are expressed so perfectly, and joined to such appealing music, should be sung by British people all over the world on occasions which give rise to these feelings. The Scotch words need not cause trouble; the meanings of the few that are unfamiliar can easily be remembered.

auld = old; *lang* = long; *syne* = since. So *auld lang syne* = the days of long ago.

2. *min'* = mind.

7. *tak'* = take. The "cup of kindness" is the drink which the two friends take together, to celebrate their meeting.

9. *twa* = two; *ha'e* = have; *braes* = hills, slopes.

10. *pu'd* = pulled; *gowans* = daisies.

11. *mony* = many; *mony a weary foot* = a long and weary distance.

12. *sin'* = since.

13. *paidl't* = paddled; *burn* = stream, brook.

14. *frae* = from; *dine* = dinner-time.

15. *braid* = broad.

18. *gie's* = *gie us*, i.e. give us.

19. *richt guid-willie* = right good-will; *guid-willie waught* = good-will draught = a cup o' kindness; *waught* = drink, draught.

Metre.—There are four accented syllables in lines 1 and 3 of each verse, three in lines 2 and 4. Usually there is a short syllable before the accented one making the "foot" ~ —, but sometimes the accented syllable stands alone. (In singing it is slurred, so as to put in the short syllable.) The second line of each verse rhymes with the fourth, which always ends in "syne".

XXII. SAY NOT THE STRUGGLE NOUGHT AVAILETH

This beautiful little poem teaches perseverance and hopefulness. We are often tempted to despond, and to give up the struggle, as so little good comes of all our efforts. Perhaps it is the fight against some fault in ourselves; perhaps the endeavour to do well in our daily work, whatever it may be; perhaps the desire to help others, to do some good in the world. We seem to be making no progress, and feel inclined to slacken our strenuous endeavours. "Courage," the poet says, "you are advancing, however slowly and imperceptibly." The lines are indeed worth remembering, for they will console us and sustain us in times of despondency.

Notice the three images: (1) The man who is striving in this way to do well is compared in verses 1 and 2 to a soldier, fighting in a stubborn battle. His enemies do not seem to be giving way. He appears to have gained nothing by all his toil and all his wounds, yet all the time his side is winning, though he does not know it.

(2) His slow progress, when he seems to be making no advance at all, is compared to the coming in of the tide. As we stand on the shore we see the waves breaking, and they appear to exhaust their force, each one reaching no further than those before it. Yet all the while the little river-beds and hollows in the sand, that have dried up at low tide, are quietly filling, without our noticing it.

(3) If we watch the sun rising, from a window looking eastward, it seems to mount very slowly, to be making scarcely any progress. Yet if we go and look out at the other side of the house, we see that the daylight is spreading over the land to the west. In the same way often, though we cannot see any definite success where we are looking for it, we are really making gradual progress—the land is becoming bright.

Picture, then, the three scenes: (1) The battle-field covered with

the smoke of the guns, which hides his comrades from the soldier, and prevents him from seeing that the enemy is flying; (2) the sea-shore with the waves breaking noisily on it, and the pools and inlets filling up quickly and quietly, as the tide comes in; (3) the sun rising slowly in the east, while the daylight spreads over the whole heaven. Only soldiers can have actual experience of the first scene, but pictures and descriptions of battles will help to bring it vividly before us. Anyone at the seaside and in the country can see the second and third scenes for himself.

1. *nought availeth* = is of no use.

5. Sometimes what we hope for does not happen; we are deceived, "duped", by our hopes. But also often what we dread does not happen; things turn out better than we expected; our "fears are liars".

7. *the fliers* = the enemy who are defeated and flying.

9, 10. The waves seem exhausted, "tired" by their attempt to advance upon the land; it seems to be useless, "vain"; they make no progress, scarcely advancing an inch after all their "painful" efforts.

11. *making* = making its way, advancing.

12. *the main* = the sea. The quiet resistless advance of the tide is suggested by the sound of this line.

Metre.—The lines have four accented syllables, and so four "feet", each being ~ —. The first and third line of each verse have an extra ~ syllable at the end. Notice the imperfect rhyme in ll. 13 and 15.

XXIII. A FAREWELL

The poet is saying good-bye to the little brook which runs by the garden of his old home. It is an experience which many have—the saying good-bye to some place in which we have lived for a long time, and the feeling that our share in it has come to an end. It will remain as we have known it "for ever and for ever", but we shall not be there.

Picture the little brook flowing by the gardens and meadows, the trees on its banks rustling and shaking as the breeze stirs them, the bees humming, the sun shining on the water: or again the same scene at night with the moonlight dancing on the rippling

stream. Anyone who has been in the country can imagine such a scene. Anyone who has had to leave a place of which he has become very fond will understand the poet's feelings at saying good-bye to it all.

1. *rivulet* = little river, brook.

2. *tribute* = what is given, paid. The "wave", *i.e.* the water of the little brook, flows at last into the sea, to which it is given or contributed. So a stream which flows into and gives its waters to a bigger river is called a 'tributary'.

5. *lea* = meadow, field.

6. The little brook will become larger as it goes on, and will turn into a river.

9. The tree is said to "sigh" from the moaning noise made by the wind in the leaves.

An alder is a tree growing specially well in moist ground, and therefore likely to be found on the swampy bank of a stream.

10. An aspen is a poplar noted for the way in which its leaves tremble at the slightest breath of wind; so it is said to "shiver".

Children in the country can have these trees pointed out, and should be made familiar with their appearance. Mere descriptions are unfortunately of little use to those who cannot see them.

13, 14. *A thousand suns, a thousand moons*. The sun and the moon will shine a thousand times, *i.e.* over and over again, on the stream. A "thousand" is used to mean a very large number. Compare viii, l. 11.

14. The moonlight "quivers", seems to dance about and not shine steadily, owing to the movement of the water.

Metre.—Lines 1 and 3 of each verse contain eight syllables, four of which are accented, making four — "feet". Lines 2 and 4 have only seven syllables, three being accented, — — | — — | — — | —. Notice the rhymes. The repetition of "for ever and for ever" in the last line of each verse emphasizes the poet's sad thought of his final parting from the scene which he loves.

XXIV. BREAK, BREAK, BREAK

This sad little poem tells an experience happily unknown to most young people—that of the loss by death of one very dear. It is, however, inserted here because of the extraordinary power of

the simple language to make us see the scene described—the constantly recurring breaking of the waves on the pebbly shore or on the rocks near by, the fisherman's boy and his sister playing noisily and happily on the beach, the sailor lad singing light-heartedly in his boat on the bay, the ships in the distance sailing slowly on to the harbour to which they are bound. Everything is joyful and beautiful, but the mourner can think only of his loss, of the hand of the dead one that he will never touch again, of the voice which he will hear no more: he feels the beauty and the joyousness, but they only deepen the sadness of his heart in a way that he cannot express.

Try to picture the scene so vividly described.

3. *would* = wish.

11, 12. These two famous lines express, in language that cannot be surpassed, the feeling which must be experienced by nearly all, sooner or later.

Metre.—There are three beats or accented syllables in each line (except in line 11 and line 15, where there are four). Sometimes the foot is made up by two previous short syllables, sometimes by one, while in lines 1 and 13 there are none—simply the three accented syllables. The second and fourth lines of each verse rhyme.

XXV. WAGES

This poem teaches the lesson of doing what is right for its own sake, not in order to win glory, or reward of any sort. The soldier, the great speaker, the poet win fame, though it lasts but a little while. Virtue needs no glory such as this; to go on doing good is sufficient reward for the good man; and after death he wishes still to be active. His idea of heaven is not one of idleness, or rest after the toils of this life. Still less can he endure the thought of being extinguished altogether; there must be a continued existence—but one of activity, not of idleness.

2. Time is like a limitless ocean, across which the world is voyaging as a ship. The sound of any particular man's fame is as brief as the sound made by a bird flying across the ship's track, and lost again immediately on the sea.

6, 7. *The wages of sin is death*. See *Romans*, vi. 23. Is the

good man to die as the sinner? Unless he can believe that this life is not all, that his existence does not end like that of a worm or a fly, how can he have the heart to struggle against temptation?

8, 9. The ancient Greeks thought, and many Christians still think, of the future life as one of rest and inactivity after the troubles of this world. Not so, says the poet: heaven must mean continued activity in doing good. The "isles of the blest" were supposed by the Greeks to be far away to the west, out in the Atlantic; they were the place to which the souls of good men went. Compare piece xxviii, l. 63.

seats = abodes, dwelling-places.

Metre.—In each line there are six beats, or accented syllables: usually these have two short syllables before them, so that the prevailing "foot" is $\sim \sim -$; sometimes there is only one, making $\sim -$; sometimes, at the beginning of the line, the accented syllable stands alone (lines 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10).

The 1st and 3rd lines in each verse, and the 2nd, 4th, and 5th, rhyme.

XXVI. QUIET WORK

The lesson of this little poem is that the best and most effective work is done quietly, without noise or fuss. Men make a great deal of noise over their money-making, their wars, and their other business. Nature does her work quietly. (Recall some instances of this—the sun, the tides, the budding and growth of plants, &c.) This work is much more lasting than man's. The language of the poem is very simple.

3. What are the two duties?

5. *unsevered from* = not separated from.

tranquillity = peace, quiet.

7. *accomplished* refers to "labour", not "schemes".

11. Name some of the "quiet ministers".

Metre.—There are five accented syllables, and so five "feet" in each line; as a rule each foot is $\sim -$, but occasionally the first foot is $- \sim$.

Being a sonnet, like xx, lines 1 and 4, 2 and 3, 5 and 8, 6 and 7, 9 and 12, 10 and 13, 11 and 14, rhyme.

XXVII. RECESSIONAL

This poem was written just after the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897, the chief features of which were the splendid military procession, including soldiers from all parts of the empire, which escorted the Queen through the streets of London, and the great naval review at Spithead a few days later. The poet fears that the sight of all this magnificence may make English people boastful, and inclined to trust in their own strength and riches, forgetting that all power comes from God, without whom we can do nothing. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (*Psalm*, cxxvii. 1). So, instead of exulting over the splendours which he has seen, he writes this solemn warning in simple and earnest words which echo the deep religious feeling of the Hebrew psalmist rather than the vain pride of the modern "Jingo".

A "Recessional" is a hymn sung at the close of a service, as the choir "recede", *i.e.* go back or away from their position. This hymn is to be sung as the guests at the Diamond Jubilee celebrations are departing.

2. British soldiers are sent to fight in all parts of the world, hurled or "flung" against enemies in far-distant lands.

4. The palm grows in hot countries, the pine in cold. Children should be able to tell what parts of the British Empire are in hot countries, what in cold.

6. *forget*—what? That all our power comes from God, without whom we are helpless.

7. We should expect the plural verb "die", but the singular "dies" may be excused, if we regard the tumult and the shouting as one and the same thing.

8. *The captains and the kings* are the distinguished soldiers and royal guests who attended the Jubilee.

9, 10. See *Psalm*, li. 17. All the splendour of the Jubilee lasts a very short time; the need for humility and repentance remains always.

13. *far-called*, *i.e.* called away to their stations in different parts of the world.

14. *dune* = sand-hill. Beacon-fires were lighted all over the country on Jubilee night.

16. *i.e.* has vanished completely. Nineveh and Tyre were great cities in Old Testament times, but their glory has long since passed away. Notice the frequent allusions to the Bible, as in lines 9 and 10, 21 and 22, 27.

19. *loose wild tongues*, *i.e.* utter wild language.

21, 22. *The Gentiles without the Law*, *i.e.* other nations. In the Bible it means those who are not Jews; here, of course, those who are not English.

26. *reeking tube* = smoking gun.

shard = splinter of a shell.

27. We are but dust—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (*Genesis*, iii. 19)—and if we rely on human aid we are building on dust.

Metre.—Each verse contains six lines, of which the first and third, second and fourth, fifth and sixth, rhyme. Each line has eight syllables, of which four are accented, making four — "feet". Sometimes the first foot is — ∪, as in lines 1 and 2.

Notice the extreme simplicity of the language; only three words (one of which is a proper name) have more than two syllables. Notice also the effect produced by the repetition of "Lest we forget" at the end of every verse except the last.

XXVIII. ULYSSES

Long, long ago—more than a thousand years B.C., according to the story—a large army of Greeks besieged the town of Troy, in Asia Minor (Turkey in Asia). The Greeks were not all under one king, but there were numerous little states, each with its own chief. Among the greatest of these chiefs was Odysseus, or Ulysses (You-lfss-ees), who was renowned for his wisdom and cunning. The siege lasted for ten years, and when at length the town was taken all sorts of misfortunes befell Ulysses on his way home, so that another ten years passed before he reached his wife, Penelope, and his son, Telemachus, in Ithaca, the little rocky island of which he was king. Ithaca is one of the Ionian islands, off the west of Greece. Ulysses' wanderings during those ten years are described in the poem called Homer's *Odyssey*. In this poem Tennyson imagines him as an old man. His long wanderings have made him restless. He cannot settle down to an old age of inactivity,

but determines to travel again, to search for fresh experience and new knowledge, till he dies. The lesson of the poem is that to be really alive we must be constantly learning. To be content with what you know, to stagnate, is not life. No laziness, but strenuous activity right up to the end—that is the picture which the poet gives us of the old man. He is supposed to be speaking, just before setting out on this last voyage.

Ll. 1-5 show us the king "bored to death" by the dulness of life on the little island. He is idle; his hearth (*i.e.* his house) is very quiet; the island is rocky and barren, his wife is old; the people over whom he rules are savage, uncultured—they care only about eating and sleeping and hoarding money, they have no intellectual interests, no ideas beyond the narrow circle of their daily experience, and are quite out of sympathy with him (they "know not me", he says). His only occupation is to administer justice to them, to decide their disputes. Each case has to be judged individually, so he is said to measure and dole out justice, which is "unequal"—no general laws can be made; what holds good in one case will not in another.

6-32. He is determined, therefore, to travel again, in search of fresh experience. Life is so short, and there is so much to learn and do, that not a moment should be wasted in idleness.

6, 7. Just as a man drinking a cup of wine drains it to the lees or dregs, so Ulysses will enjoy his life to the very end.

10. *scudding drifts* = drifting showers passing rapidly over the sea: the wind blowing them would make it rough, and the rain would make it "dim", difficult to see one's way.

The *Hyades* (name derived from a Greek word meaning "to rain") are certain stars whose rising was accompanied, according to the Greeks and Romans, by rainy weather.

11. I have become famous.

12. *a hungry heart*—hungry or eager for knowledge and experience.

14. *manners* = customs.

15. I myself not being of little importance, but a great man, honoured everywhere.

16. The *delight of battle* is the physical pleasure of fighting. The man fighting is said to drink it in, gulp it down eagerly.

peers = equals, *i.e.* the other chiefs who fought at Troy.

17. *ringing*, with the noise of battle—the clanging of the armour, the spears and swords.

windy is an adjective often applied to Troy by Homer. This is one of many reminiscences of Greek and Roman poets in this poem: they can only be fully appreciated by those who are familiar with the classics.

18. Ulysses has been no unimportant spectator of the events which he has seen: he has played a great part in them.

19–21. The more we learn the more we find there is to learn. Just as when we walk towards the horizon we get no nearer to it, so when we advance in knowledge the goal of perfect knowledge seems as far off as ever.

23. A man who is idle becomes dull, just as a sword becomes rusty which is not kept bright (burnished) and in constant use.

26. Ulysses is old: the hours of life which remain to him are comparatively few: he will not waste one of them; in each he may learn something.

28–32. It would be a mean thing to spare himself, and check his eager spirit, just in order to live a little longer and not be worn out so soon.

29. *some three suns* = three or four years—revolutions of the earth round the sun.

30. *gray* = old. Gray hair accompanies old age, so anything old is called gray. His spirit is anxious to follow knowledge to its utmost limits; just as we cannot see a star when it sinks below the horizon, the limit of our sight, so there are objects of knowledge which we cannot see, they are beyond our powers of thought at present.

33–43. *Telemachus* (Tee-lém-ack-us), Ulysses' son, is far better fitted to govern the island than he. Notice the contrast between the eager, restless, enterprising father and the patient, worthy, but unenterprising and somewhat uninteresting son.

40. Telemachus is “decent”, *i.e.* seemly, well-behaved, so he is sure to look after his mother, and perform all the religious services to which attention has to be paid.

42. Each household worshipped specially certain gods, whose images it preserved, and under whose protection it was supposed to be. The old Greeks believed not only in a supreme God, Zeus, but in a multitude of lesser deities.

44-end. Ulysses turns to his sailors, the men who have been his faithful comrades in all the experiences of his life, and gives them the order to start. Notice (a) the dignity and simplicity of the language of this address: it consists mostly of one-syllable words; (b) the marvellous way in which the sound is suited to the meaning often, and makes us almost see the scene described. Especially in ll. 44, 45 and 54-56 the picture is most vivid. We seem to see the little harbour on the rocky shore. Inside it is the ship ready to start, her sail set, and filled by the gentle breeze which is blowing. Beyond is the great sea, the wide waters seeming black in the growing twilight. The moon is rising slowly, and one by one along the shore the lights appear in the cottages of the islanders; in the still evening air the noise of the waves breaking on the shore is the only sound that interrupts the silence.

45. *gloom*, a verb = are gloomy.

46, 47. Contrast the sound of these two lines; the first with its slow difficult movement suggesting the long and painful toil of Ulysses and his comrades; the second with its easy rippling flow indicating the cheery light-heartedness with which they faced both good and evil fortune.

46. *wrought* = worked.

47. *frolic*, an adjective = frolicsome, light-hearted.

49. Whether their fortune were good or bad, they faced it as free men, not like slaves, insolent when prosperous and cowardly when in adversity.

53. In Homer's story the gods took the liveliest interest in the doings of men. Some fought for the Greeks, others for the Trojans; so that Ulysses and his men could be said to have fought with gods.

unbecoming = unworthy of.

55. *wanes* = grows less, draws to a close. Notice again the drag of the monosyllabic line, suggesting how slowly the day passes to the man who is so eager to set out.

58, 59. The rowers sitting in order are to strike the sea with their oars. The uneven surface of the sea is compared to a ploughed field, the gaps between the waves being like the furrows.

60. *beyond the sunset*, i.e. right away to the west.

the baths, &c., i.e. where the stars seem to dip down into the ocean in the west, as they set.

62. The ancient idea was that the earth was flat, with a river called Oceanus running round the edge of it. A ship carried beyond this would be washed down by a sort of cataract over the edge of the earth into space.

63. In the far west were supposed to be the Happy Isles, where the souls of the blessed dead were.

64. *Achilles* (Ack-fil-ees), the bravest of the Greeks. He was killed during the Trojan war.

69-70. We are not so strong as in old days, when our great deeds seemed to shake heaven and earth; our bodies are weak owing to the inevitable advance of old age, but our hearts are brave, tempered evenly like steel to resist all shocks, and our wills are strong. We are determined to struggle on and be successful in our search for new adventures, and never to give way.

Metre.—"Blank verse", *i.e.* unrhymed lines with five accented syllables, and so five "feet", each foot containing — —. Sometimes in the first foot — — is substituted, *e.g.* ll. 3, 7, 8. The simplicity of the language has already been noted. Of the 566 words in the poem no less than 454 are of one syllable only; 96 are of two syllables; and but 16 are of more than two syllables, 2 of these being proper names.

XXIX. WOLSEY'S FAREWELL

We have in this piece a picture of the old age of a man who has been great in the world, and has felt the vanity of earthly success. He welcomes his release from the care and bustle of it, and looks forward to a peaceful time, in which to prepare himself for death. Contrast the pictures of old age in xxviii and xxx, where the ideal is of strenuous activity right up to the end of life.

Thomas Wolsey, in the earlier part of King Henry VIII's reign, rose from a humble position to be the leading statesman in England, being Lord Chancellor, as well as Archbishop of York and Cardinal. The king's desire to obtain a divorce from Katharine of Aragon, which Wolsey failed to gratify, brought about his downfall in 1529. Shakespeare here represents him as meditating on the tragedy of his fall, and yet thankful to be freed from the burdens and anxieties of greatness. Cromwell, who enters during the soliloquy, was his secretary, and afterwards himself became

Chancellor, and was active in carrying out the suppression of the monasteries for Henry VIII.

Notice the two comparisons which Wolsey makes: (1) He compares himself (ll. 1-7) to a tree which buds and blossoms in spring-time, and then is killed by the return of frost, just when it seemed likely to bear fruit and ripen. His hopes correspond to the first tender leaves which shoot from the tree, his success to the blossoms which cover it, and his fall to its death, when it is nipped by the frost.

(2) He compares himself (ll. 8-14) to a boy swimming out of his depth, relying on the support of inflated bladders, which prevent him from sinking: the bladders burst, and the boy, left without his support, is drowned. Wolsey's "high-blown pride", *i.e.* the arrogance which his power and great position have caused—with which, as we say, he has been "puffed up"—corresponds to the bladders: it has carried him along far away from the safety of the solid ground out on to a "sea of glory", a splendid but insecure position. The bursting of the bladders corresponds to the collapse of his power, when he loses the king's favour: there is nothing to support him, and he is left to sink.

6. *easy* = comfortable, hopeful.

9. *wanton* = playful, sportive.

Thus far he has lamented his fall. He now (ll. 15-33) thinks of the relief and peace which it brings him.

16. *new* = anew, again. During his greatness his heart had been shut up, *i.e.* his natural affections had been checked, he had been obliged to play a part in his anxiety to keep the king's favour.

17. *hangs on* = depends on, is anxious to keep.

18-20. *betwixt* = between.

aspire to = hope to secure.

sweet aspect = kind, favourable regard.

their ruin must be the ruin which they cause to the man who fails to retain their favour. The three lines then mean: 'Soldiers in war, women in child-birth, suffer many pains and fears, but the man who tries to curry favour with princes suffers more; so great is the strain and anxiety from the time that he first begins to hope for it, and on during the period when he is successful, up to the time when he loses it and is ruined.'

21. The favourite who has fallen from power has no more chance of being restored than Satan, who was expelled from Heaven for disobedience, had of being taken back again.

Lucifer = Satan, the devil. The name was applied to him from a mistaken idea that *Isaiah* xiv. 12 referred to him. Compare *S. Luke*, x. 18.

22. *how now* = "what is it?" "what is the matter?"

22, 23. Are you surprised that a man who has been so great can have lost his power?

25. *an* = if.

26. *I am fallen indeed*. Wolsey is indeed sorry for his fall, if it grieves Cromwell: as far as he is himself concerned, he does not regret it.

27-35. The man who has a great earthly position is so busy, lives in such a whirl, and often has to act so unscrupulously, that his conscience can never be at rest, he can never know "the peace of God which passeth understanding".

Metre. — Ordinary "blank verse" (as in xiii, xv, xxviii), the normal line containing ten syllables, of which the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th are accented, making five ~ — "feet". Most of the lines in this piece have an extra short syllable at the end. Sometimes the first foot is — ~ instead of ~ —, *e.g.* in l. 13, "weary".

XXX. PROSPICE

"Prospice" (Pro-spiss-e) means "Look forward". The poet looks forward to the time when he must die, and determines to do so bravely. Courage and cheerfulness are always the great characteristics of Browning. Many people wish to lose consciousness before they die, to escape the horror of being actually face to face with death; he on the contrary wishes to shirk nothing, "to taste the whole of it", and be fully conscious. He knows that the moment of death is terrible, but trusts God completely, and looks forward to meeting again, when it is over, his beloved wife who has died before him. The same spirit of strenuousness, courage, and confidence comes out in the "Epilogue" (xxxi). No shirking, no slackness, no cowardice, but trust in God and certainty that everything will come right—these are the lessons of the two poems.

The life of man is pictured as a journey up a mountain. It is hard work never to be slack or cowardly, always to fight against temptation and try to do our duty: we are going uphill constantly. The end of life is compared to the top of the mountain: the reward of all our struggles is there, but before we can reach it we have to meet and fight with Death, who is represented as a person guarding the approach—a harder struggle than any before. Those who climb mountains often, as they get high up, encounter storms and mists, driving snow and roaring wind; these correspond to the terrors of death, as we get near to the end of our journey up the mountain of life.

Picture the man nearly at the top, climbing over the rocks, and also the snow and ice, which are found on high mountains (the Alps, for example). It is dark, the snow is whirling round him, and the wind howling and blowing with fearful force. Only those who have been on a high mountain in bad weather can fully realize the picture, but everyone knows what a snowstorm, and a hurricane, and a dark night are like, and so can understand something of the terrors described. Everything combines to shake the man's courage, and make him shrink back, yet he has to go on and encounter the terrible spectre, who guards the approach to the top.

1. (Do I) *fear death?* (Do I fear) *to feel, &c.?*

3. *denote* = tell, show.

5. *The power of the night* = the terrible darkness, which makes me feel so helpless.

the press of the storm = the storm pressing on me and hustling me about.

6. The place where the enemy (Death) is posted.

7. *Arch* = chief (cp. arch-bishop), so *Arch Fear* = most terrible of all things.

8. There is no turning back for anyone; strong or weak, he must face death.

9. *summit* = top.

10. After death, there is a reward for the good and brave. This is pictured as a heavenly home at the top of the mountain. As the weary climber approaches, the gate of it opens for him. The way is clear, except for Death, with whom he must fight.

11. *a battle's to fight* = there is a battle to fight.

guerdon = prize, reward.

13. *ever* = always.

15. Sometimes Death, pitying the weak, bandages their eyes, *i.e.* blindfolds them, and lets them pass without seeing his terrors. These are the people who become unconscious before the actual moment of death, and so escape its terror. Browning says that he prefers to die fighting and fully conscious, like the heroes of old who fell in battle, whose equal in bravery he proudly claims to be.

17. *fare like* = have the same experience as.

peers = equals.

19. *the brunt* = the burden, the full weight of the terrible fight with death.

arrears = what is behindhand, not paid. Browning has had a very happy life ("glad", he calls it)—less pain and gloom and want than many. He feels that if we all must have a certain amount of pain he has not had his due share, and thinks that this fearful fight with death will to some extent make up his arrears, pay what he owes.

21. Suddenly, to the man who fights bravely through, the change comes from the terrible moment of death (the worst) to the joy of the heavenly home (the best). The short time of terrible agony (the black minute) is at an end. The noise of the storm (the elements = the wind, rain, &c.), and the fearful sounds which seem like the voices of mocking demons (fiend-voices) die away, and mingle together into a peaceful, soothing sound. As he emerges from the darkness into the light the poet is met by his beloved wife, whom he embraces again. So far his imagination takes him; what is beyond he does not picture, but he is sure that all will be well, and trusts in God—"with God be the rest".

27. *soul of my soul*: an expression of deepest love.

Metre.—A long and a short line alternate, the long lines having four accented syllables, and so four "feet", and the short lines two. Each foot is either \sim - or $\sim \sim$ -. As in v, the preponderance of short syllables suits the breathless, thrilling narrative. In l. 17 the word "No" seems to stand outside the metre, the line $\sim \sim$ - | \sim - | $\sim \sim$ - | $\sim \sim$ - being complete without it. The abrupt monosyllable makes a pause in the rapid flow of the lines, and puts away decisively the idea suggested in the two previous verses.

Notice that the second foot of the short lines in every case consists of the three syllables $\sim \sim$ -.

XXXI. EPILOGUE TO "ASOLANDO"

"Epilogue" means "thing spoken after", something said at the end of a play or book. This short piece comes at the end of Browning's last volume of poetry—called *Asolando*—published, as it happened, just at the time of his death. It is his last message to the world, and teaches the courage, cheerfulness, and strenuousness which are always his characteristics. The third verse will console us and sustain us when things go wrong, and may well serve as a motto, an interpretation of life to which we should strive to attain.

The poet imagines that after his death some friend of his may be lying awake at night, and may begin to think of him and pity him because he is dead, in the prison of the grave. He says that to pity him would be a great mistake. Anyone who did so would not understand his view of life, which is that all our difficulties here are put in our way that we may become better by the effort of overcoming them: even when we seem to fail, we are making progress, if we try hard, and to one who is always brave and cheerful and strenuous death is not the end of all things, but the beginning of a better life.

2. When we cannot go to sleep at night, our thoughts wander to all sorts of subjects, we "set our fancies free".

5. (Will you) *pity me*?

6. *Oh* (what a grand thing it is) *to love so, be so loved, yet* (what a pity to be) *so mistaken!*

7, *seq.* You think that all is over with me when I am dead, that I am to be pitied. Not so: when I was on earth I had nothing to do with, nothing in common with, lazy, sickly cowards who talk nonsense (drivel), and have no definite purpose, or power of action, or hope. What was I? Verse 3 answers this.

11. Notice the image. He is a soldier who never runs away, but marches and fights with his face to the foe (breast forward). Compare "Prospice", l. 13.

12. Success may be hidden, as the sun is hidden by the clouds, but the clouds always break in time. Compare xxii ("Say not the Struggle"), l. 6.

13. What is wrong and evil may prosper for a time, but it cannot last. The right and good must triumph in the end.

14. The climber may stumble, but he gets up again, and struggles on with more determination. The soldier may be baffled, checked by the enemy, but he never knows when he is beaten. He tries all the harder and fights better. Compare again "Prospice".

15. After the sleep of death we wake to a better life.

16. The same idea as in "Prospice", l. 15. He does not wish to have his eyes bandaged, to be unconscious at death, but to work and fight on till the end.

17. *the unseen* = Death, and what comes after death.

18. *Bid him* (to come) *forward*, don't shirk his approach.

as either should be = in the place where each ought to be, *i.e.* breast toward, back away from, the enemy.

19, 20. The disconnected cries of the soldier, to encourage himself as he fights.

Fare ever there as here = be the same after death as during life. Death is not the end of all things. Compare l. 3.

Metre.—Lines 1, 3, and 4 of each verse have three accented syllables—three "feet" with an additional short syllable at the end, twelve syllables in all,

◡ ◡ — | ◡ ◡ ◡ — | ◡ ◡ ◡ — | ◡.

(Line 4 of the last verse has only ten syllables,

◡ ◡ — | ◡ ◡ — | ◡ ◡ ◡ — | ◡.

There is a pause after "speed", so that the second foot is ◡ — instead of ◡ ◡ —. The line is perhaps intentionally broken and irregular, to represent the broken and breathless cries of the fighter.)

Line 2 in each verse has two accented syllables,

◡ ◡ — | ◡ ◡ ◡ —.

Line 5 has one,

◡ ◡ —.

BRIEF NOTES ON THE POETS

Arnold, Matthew (1822-1888), was the son of Dr. Arnold, the famous head-master of Rugby. He was born and buried at Laleham, a village on the Thames, just below Staines. He was for many years an Inspector of Schools, and is famous as a writer both of prose and poetry.

Browning, Robert (1812-1889), was a Londoner, born at Camberwell. He lived much in Italy, but loved England dearly, and his courage and cheerfulness made him a typical Englishman. His wife was Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the poetess. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Burns, Robert (1759-1796), born near Ayr, the son of a farmer. His life was short and stormy. He is the greatest of Scots poets.

Campbell, Thomas (1777-1844), also a Scotsman, born at Glasgow. His best-known poems are patriotic ballads. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Clough, Arthur Hugh (1819-1861), was educated at Rugby (under Dr. Arnold) and Oxford. He was a great friend of Matthew Arnold.

Eliot, George (1819-1880), whose real name was Mary Ann Evans, was one of the greatest novelists of the last century.

Field, Eugene (1850-1895), an American writer of children's verses.

Kipling, Rudyard (1865—), born in Bombay: first became famous by his stories of Indian life, and his insight into the character of the British soldier.

Milton, John (1608-1674), was born in London, and buried there in St. Giles', Cripplegate. He became quite blind in 1652, and his greatest poem, *Paradise Lost*, was dictated after this time.

He took the side of the Parliament against King Charles in the Civil War, and wrote many pamphlets on political affairs.

Newbolt, Henry (1862—), educated at Clifton College and Oxford: has written several fine patriotic and other poems.

Shakespeare, William (1564-1616), born, educated, and buried at Stratford-on-Avon: spent some years in London and became famous as an actor and dramatist. Very little is known of his life, but he is universally recognized as the greatest of English poets.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe (1792-1822), wrote many very beautiful poems, though he died when only thirty. He spent much time in Italy, and was drowned in a boating accident off its coast.

Stevenson, Robert Louis (1845-1894), born in Edinburgh, died in Samoa. He is chiefly known as a writer of novels and other prose works.

Tennyson, Alfred (1809-1892), born in Lincolnshire, buried in Westminster Abbey. He and Browning are the greatest of modern English poets. He was made a peer in 1884.

Wordsworth, William (1770-1850), was born in Cumberland, and spent most of his life in the Lake District, where he is buried at Grasmere.

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